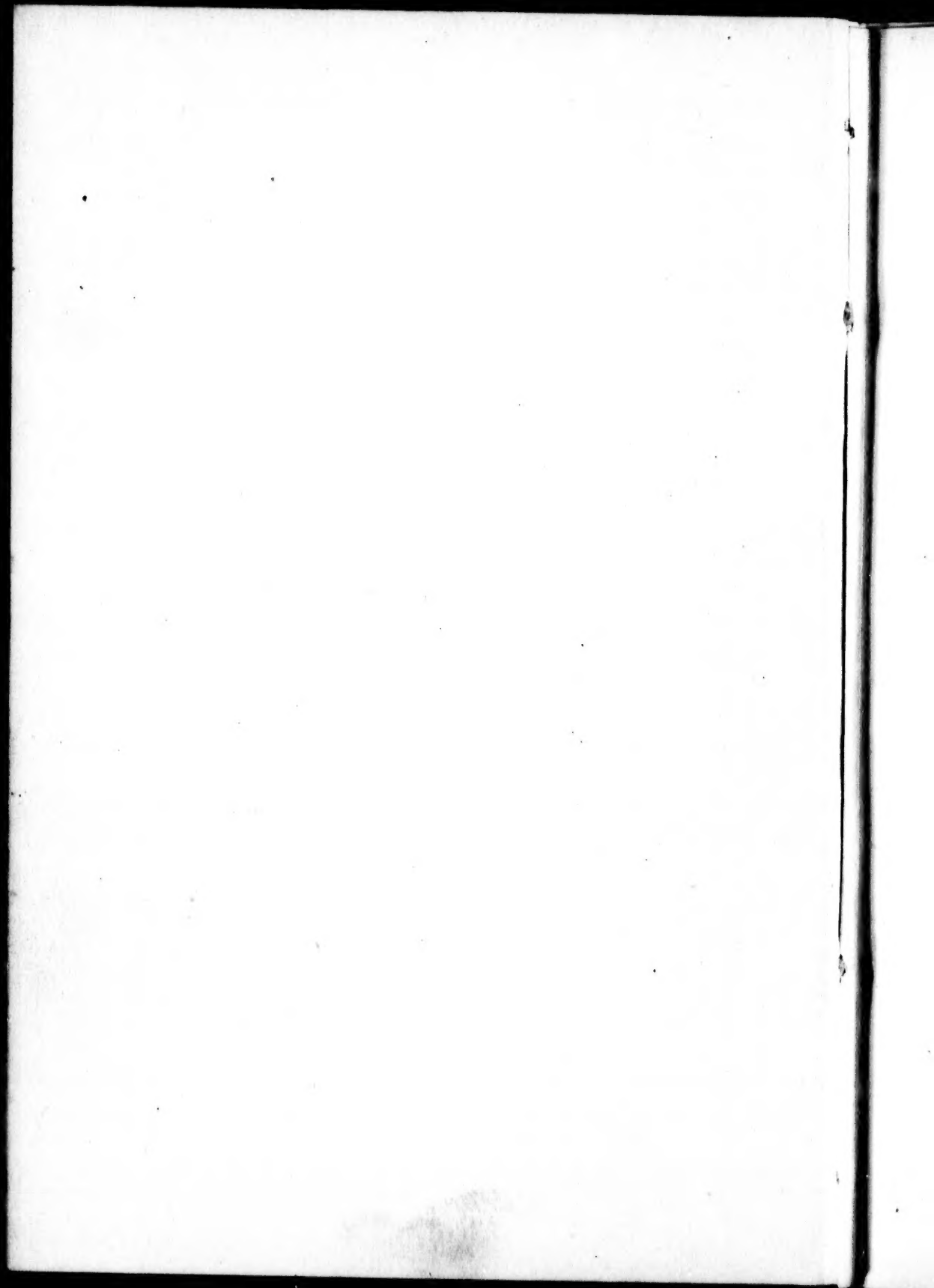
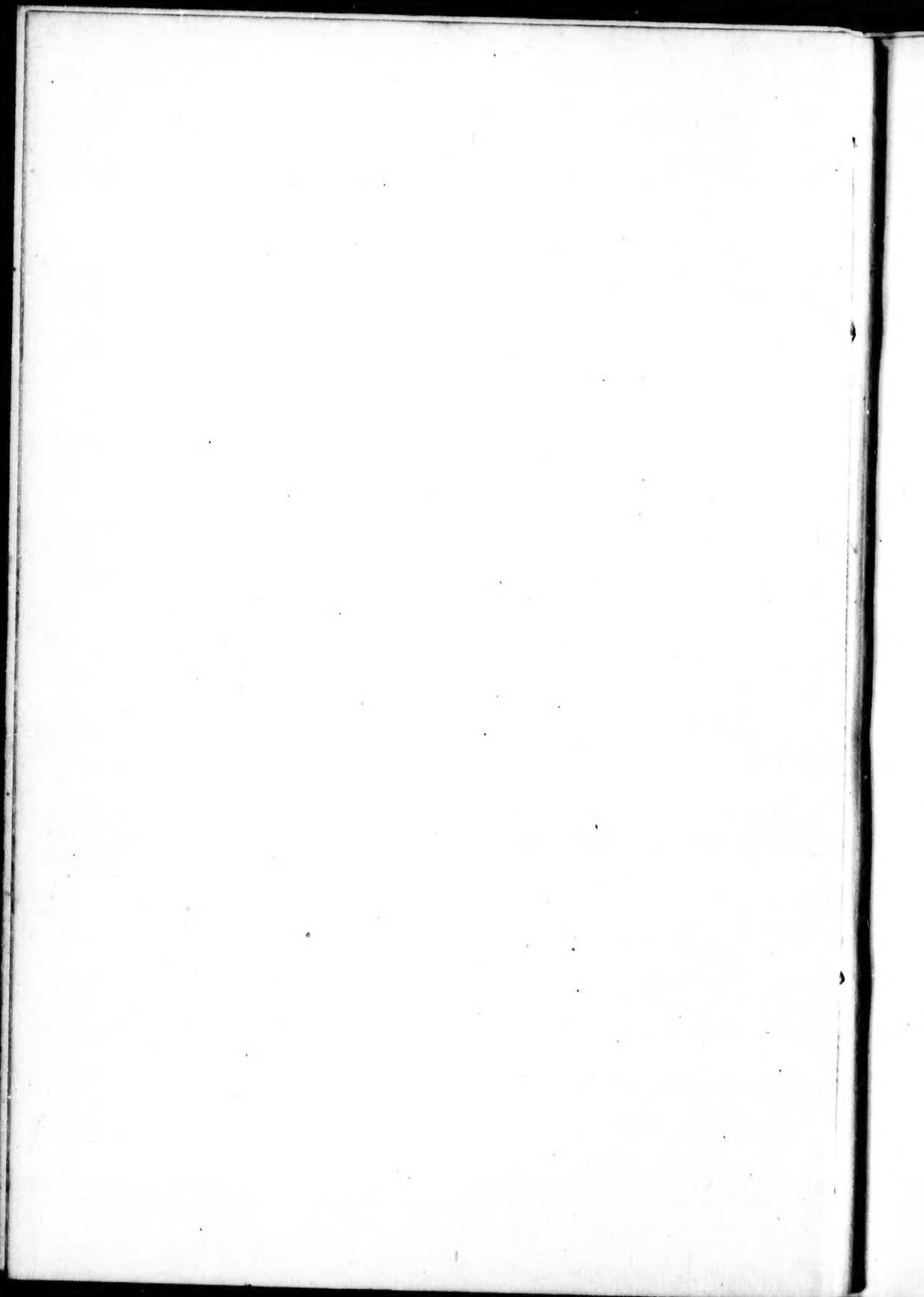




DAISY THORNTON.

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JESSIE GRAHAM.



DAISY THORNTON;

AND

JESSIE GRAHAM.

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BY

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES,

AUTHOR OF "TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE," "LENA RIVERS," "DARKNESS  
AND DAYLIGHT," &c., &c.

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# CONTENTS.

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## DAISY THORNTON.

| CHAPTER.                                                   | PAGE. |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| I. Extracts from Miss Frances Thornton's Journal . . . . . | 9     |
| II. Extracts from Guy's Journal . . . . .                  | 20    |
| III. Extracts from Daisy's Journal. . . . .                | 25    |
| IV. Author's Story . . . . .                               | 32    |
| V. The Divorce . . . . .                                   | 37    |
| VI. Extracts from Diaries . . . . .                        | 44    |
| VII. Five Years Later . . . . .                            | 56    |
| VIII. Daisy's Letter . . . . .                             | 61    |
| IX. Daisy, Tom, and that Other One . . . . .               | 69    |
| X. Miss McDonald . . . . .                                 | 84    |
| XI. At Saratoga . . . . .                                  | 102   |
| XII. In the Sick Room . . . . .                            | 107   |
| XIII. Daisy's Journal . . . . .                            | 114   |

## JESSIE GRAHAM ; OR, LOVE AND PRIDE.

| CHAPTER.                                    | PAGE. |
|---------------------------------------------|-------|
| I. The Inmates of the Farm-House . . . . .  | 121   |
| II. Mr. Graham and Jessie . . . . .         | 132   |
| III. Eight Years Later . . . . .            | 147   |
| IV. Jessie and Ellen . . . . .              | 154   |
| V. Walter and Jessie . . . . .              | 174   |
| VI. Old Mrs. Bartow . . . . .               | 195   |
| VII. Human Nature . . . . .                 | 211   |
| VIII. A Retrospect . . . . .                | 226   |
| IX. Nellie . . . . .                        | 231   |
| X. A Disclosure . . . . .                   | 240   |
| XI. The Night after the Burial . . . . .    | 250   |
| XII. A Crisis . . . . .                     | 256   |
| XIII. Explanations . . . . .                | 260   |
| XIV. The Stranger Nurse . . . . .           | 278   |
| XV. Glorious News . . . . .                 | 293   |
| XVI. Thanksgiving Day at Deerwood . . . . . | 300   |
| XVII. Conclusion . . . . .                  | 310   |

# DAISY THORNTON.

## CHAPTER I.

### EXTRACTS FROM MISS FRANCES THORNTON'S JOURNAL.

ELMWOOD, *June 15th, 18—.*

I HAVE been working among my flowers all the morning, digging, weeding and transplanting, and then stopping a little to rest. My roses are perfect beauties this year, while my white lilies are the wonder of the town. and yet my heart was not with them to-day, and it was nothing to me that those fine people from the Towers came into the grounds while I was at work, "just to see and admire," they said, adding that there was no place in Cuylerville like Elmwood. I know that, and Guy and I have been so happy here, and I loved him so much, and never dreamed what was in store for me until it came suddenly like a heavy blow.

Why should he wish to marry, when he has lived to be thirty years old without a care of any kind, and has money enough to allow him to indulge his taste for books, and pictures, and travel, and is respected by everybody,

and looked up to as the first man in town, and petted and cared for by me as few brothers have ever been petted and cared for? and if he must marry why need he take a child of sixteen, whom he has only known since Christmas, and whose sole recommendation, so far as I can learn, is her pretty face?

Daisy McDonald is her name, and she lives in Indianapolis, where her father is a poor lawyer, and as I have heard, a scheming, unprincipled man. Guy met her last winter in Chicago, and fell in love at once, and made two or three journeys West on "important business," he said, and then, some time in May, told me he was going to bring me a sister, the sweetest little creature, with beautiful blue eyes and wonderful hair. I was sure to love her, he said; and when I suggested that she was very young, he replied that her youth was in her favor, as we could more easily mould her to the Thornton pattern.

Little he knows about girls; but then he was perfectly infatuated and blind to everything but Daisy's eyes, and hair, and voice, which is so sweet and winning that it will speak for her at once. Then she is so dainty and refined, he said, and he asked me to see to the furnishing of the rooms on the west side of the house, the two which communicate with his own private library, where he spends a great deal of time with his books and writing. The room adjoining this was to be Daisy's boudoir or parlor, where she could sit when he was occupied and she wished to be near him. This was to be fitted up in blue, as she had expressed a wish to that effect, and he said no expense must be spared to make it as pretty and attractive

as possible. So the walls were frescoed and tinted, and I spent two entire days in New York hunting for a carpet of the desirable shade, which should be right both in texture and design.

Guy was exceedingly particular, and developed a wonderful proclivity to find fault with everything I admired. Nothing was quite the thing for Daisy, until at last a manufacturer offered to get a carpet up which was sure to suit, and so that question was happily settled for the time being. Then came the furniture, and unlimited orders were given to the upholsterer to do his best, and matters were progressing finely when order number two came from the little lady, who was sorry to seem so fickle, but her mamma, whose taste was perfect, had decided against *all* blue, and would Guy please furnish the room with drab trimmed with blue? "It must be a very delicate shade of drab," she wrote, and lest he should get too intense an idea, she would call it a *tint* of a *shade* of drab, or, better yet, a *hint* of a tint of a shade of drab would describe exactly what she meant, and be so entirely unique, and lovely, and *recherche*.

Guy never swears, and seldom uses slang of any kind, but this was a little too much, and with a most rueful expression of countenance he asked me "what in thunder I supposed a hint of a tint of a shade of drab could be?"

I could not enlighten him, and we finally concluded to leave it to the upholsterer, to whom Guy telegraphed in hot haste, bidding him hunt New York over for the desired shade. Where he found it I never knew; but find it he did, or something approximating to it,—a faded.

washed-out color, which seemed a cross between wood-ashes and pale skim milk. A sample was sent up for Guy's approval, and then the work commenced again, when order number three came in one of those dainty little billets which used to make Guy's face radiant with happiness. Daisy had changed her mind again and gone back to the blue, which she always preferred as most becoming to her complexion.

Guy did not say a single word, but he took the next train for New York, and staid there till the furniture was done and packed for Cuylerville. As I did not know where he was stopping, I could not forward him two letters which came during his absence, and which bore the Indianapolis post-mark. I suspect he had a design in keeping his address from me, and, whether Daisy changed her mind again or not, I never knew.

The furniture reached Elmwood the day but one before Guy started for his bride, and Julia Hamilton, who was then at the Towers, helped me to arrange the room, which is a perfect little gem, and cannot fail to please, I am sure. I wonder Guy never fancied Julia Hamilton. Oh, if he only had done so, I should not have as many misgivings as I now have, nor dread the future so much. Julia is sensible and twenty years old, and lives in Boston, and comes of a good family, and is every way suitable,—but when did a man ever choose the woman whom his sister thought suitable for him? And Guy is like other men, and this is his wedding day; and after a trip to Montreal, and Quebec, and Boston, and New York, and Saratoga, they are coming home, and I am to give a grand recep-

tion, and then subside, I suppose, into the position of the "old maid sister who will be dreadfully in the way."

*September 15th, 18—.*

Just three months since I opened my journal, and, on glancing over what I wrote on Guy's wedding day, I find that in one respect at least I was unjust to the little creature who is now my sister, and calls me Miss Frances. Not by word or look has she shown the least inclination to assume the position of mistress of the house, nor does she seem to think me at all in the way; but that she considers me quite an antediluvian I am certain, for, in speaking of something which happened in 1820, she asked if I remembered it! And I only three years older than Guy! But then she once called him a dear old grandfatherly man, and thought it a good joke that on their wedding tour she was mistaken for his daughter. She looks so young,—not sixteen even; but with those childish blue eyes, and that innocent, pleading kind of expression she never can be old. She is very beautiful, and I can understand in part Guy's infatuation, though at times he hardly knows what to do with his pretty plaything.

It was the middle of August when they came from Saratoga, sorely against her wishes, as I heard from the Porters, who were at the same hotel, and who have told me what a sensation she created, and how much attention she received. Everybody flattered her, and one evening, when there was to be a hop at Congress Hall, she received twenty bouquets from as many different admirers, each of



whom asked her hand for the first dance. And even Guy tried some of the square dances,—with poor success, I imagine, for Lucy Porter laughed when she told me of it, and the mistakes he made ; and I do not wonder, for my grave, scholarly Guy must be as much out of place in a ball-room as his little, airy, doll of a wife is in her place when there. I can understand just how she enjoyed it all, and how she hated to come to Elmwood, for she did not then know the kind of home she was coming to.

It was glorious weather for August, and a rain of the previous day had washed all the flowers and shrubs, and freshened up the grass on the lawn, which was just like a piece of velvet, while everything around the house seemed to laugh in the warm afternoon sunshine as the carriage came up to the door. Eight trunks, two hat-boxes, and a guitar-case had come in the morning, and were waiting the arrival of their owner, whose face looked eagerly out at the house and its surroundings, and it seemed to me did not light up as much as it should have done under the circumstances.

"Why, Guy, I always thought the house was brick," I heard her say, as the carriage door was opened by the coachman.

"No, darling,—wood. Ah, there's Fan," was Guy's reply, and the next moment I had her in my arms.

Yes, literally in my arms. She is such a wee little thing, and her face is so sweet, and her eyes so childish and wistful and her voice so musical and flute-like that before I knew what I was doing I lifted her from her feet and hugged her hard, and said I meant to love her, first

for Guy's sake, and then for her own. Was it my fancy, I wonder, or did she really shrink back a little and put up her hands to arrange the bows, and streamers, and curls floating away from her like the flags on a vessel on some gala day.

She was very tired, Guy said, and ought to lie down before dinner. Would I show her to her room with Zillah, her maid? Then, for the first time, I noticed a dark-haired girl who had alighted from the carriage and stood holding Daisy's travelling-bag and wraps.

"Her waiting-maid, whom we found in Boston," Guy explained, when we were alone. "She is so young and helpless and wanted one so badly, that I concluded to humor her for a time, especially as I had not the most remote idea how to pin on those wonderful fixings which she wears. It is astonishing how many things it takes to make up the *tout ensemble* of a fashionable woman," Guy said; and I thought he glanced with an unusual amount of curiosity and interest at my plain cambric wrapper and smooth hair.

Indeed he has taken it upon himself to criticise me somewhat; thinks I am too slim, as he expresses it; and that my head might be improved if it had a more snarly appearance. Daisy, of course, stands for his model, and her hair does not look as if it had been combed in a month, and yet Zillah spends hours over it. She,—that is, Daisy,—was pleased with her boudoir, and gave vent to sundry exclamations of delight when she entered it, skipped around like the child she is, and said she was so glad it was blue instead of that indescribable drab, and

that room is almost the only thing she has expressed an opinion about since she has been here. She does not talk much except to Zillah, and then in French, which I do not understand. If I were to write just what I think, I should say that she had expected a great deal more grandeur than she finds. At all events, she takes the things which I think very nice and even elegant as a matter of course, and if we were to set up a style of living equal to that of the queen's household, I do believe she would act as if she had been accustomed to it all her life, or, at least, that it was what she had a right to expect. I know she imagines Guy a great deal richer than he is; and that reminds me of something which troubles me.

Guy has given his name to Dick Trevylian for one hundred thousand dollars. To be sure it is only for three months, and Dick is worth three times that amount, and is an old friend and every way reliable and honest. And still I did not want Guy to sign. I wonder why it is that women always jump at a conclusion without any apparent reason. Of course, I could not explain it, but when Guy told me what he was going to do, I felt in an instant as if he would have it all to pay, and told him so, but he only laughed at me and called me nervous and fidgety, and said a friend was good for nothing if he could not lend a helping hand occasionally. Perhaps that is true, but I was uneasy and shall be glad when the time is up and the paper cancelled.

Our expenses since Daisy came are double what they were before, and if we were to lose one hundred thousand

dollars now we should be badly off. Daisy is a luxury Guy has to pay for, but he pays willingly and seems to grow more and more infatuated every day. "She is such a sweet-tempered, affectionate little puss," he says; and I admit to myself that she *is* sweet tempered, and that nothing ruffles her, but about the affectionate part I am not so certain. Guy would pet her and caress her all the time if she would let him, but she won't.

"O, please don't touch me. It is too warm, and you muss my dress," I have heard her say more than once when he came in and tried to put his arm about her or take her in his lap.

Indeed her dress seems to be uppermost in her mind, and I have known her to try on half a dozen different ones before she could decide in which she looked the best. No matter what Guy is doing, or how deeply he is absorbed in his studies, she makes him stop and inspect her from all points, and give his opinion, and Guy submits in a way perfectly wonderful to me who never dared to disturb him when shut up with his books.

Another thing, too, he submits to which astonishes me more than anything else. It used to annoy him terribly to wait for anything or anybody. *He* was always ready, and expected others to be, but Daisy is just the reverse. Such dawdling habits I never saw in any person. With Zillah to help her dress she is never ready for breakfast, never ready for dinner, never ready for church, never ready for anything, and that, in a household accustomed to order and regularity, does put things back so, and make so much trouble.

"Don't wait breakfast for me, please," she says, when she has been called for the third or fourth time, and if she can get us to sit down without her she seems to think it all right, and that she can be as long as she likes.

I wonder that it never occurs to her that to keep the breakfast table round, as we must, makes the girls cross and upsets the kitchen generally. I hinted as much to her once when the table stood till ten o'clock, and she only opened her great blue eyes wonderingly, and said mamma had spoiled her she guessed, for it did not use to matter at home when she was ready, but she would try and do better. She bade Zillah call her at *five* the next morning, and Zillah called her, and then she was a half hour late. Guy doesn't like that, and he looked daggers on the night of the reception, when the guests began to arrive before she was dressed! And she commenced her toilet too at three o'clock! But she was wondrously beautiful in her bridal robes, and took all hearts by storm. She is perfectly at home in society, and knows just what to do and say so long as the conversation keeps in the fashionable round of chit-chat, but when it drifts into deeper channels she is silent at once, or only answers in monosyllables. I believe she is a good French scholar, and she plays and sings tolerably well, and reads the novels as they come out, but of books and literature, in general, she is wholly ignorant, and if Guy thought to find in her any sympathy with his favorite studies and authors he is terribly mistaken.

And yet, as I write all this, my conscience gives me sundry pricks as if I were wronging her, for in spite of

her faults I like her ever so much, and like to watch her flitting through the house and grounds like the little fairy she is, and I hope the marriage may turn out well, and that she will improve with age, and make Guy very happy.



## CHAPTER II.

## EXTRACTS FROM GUY'S JOURNAL.

---

*September 20th, 18—.*

THREE months married. Three months with Daisy all to myself, and yet not exactly to myself either, for of her own accord she does not often come where I am, unless it is just as I have shut myself up in my room, thinking to have a quiet hour with my books. Then she generally appears, and wants me to ride with her, or play croquet, or see which dress is most becoming, and I always submit and obey her as if I were the child instead of herself.

She *is* young, and I almost wonder her parents allowed her to marry. Fan hints they were mercenary, but if they were they concealed the fact wonderfully well, and made me think it a great sacrifice on their part to give me Daisy. And so it was ; such a lovely little darling, and so beautiful. What a sensation she created at Saratoga ! and still I was glad to get away, for I did not fancy some things which were done there. I did not like so many young men around her, nor her dancing those abominable round dances which she seemed to enjoy so much. "Square dances were poky," she said, even after I tried them with her for the sake of keeping her out of



that vile John Briton's arms. I have an impression that I made a spectacle of myself, hopping about like a magpie, but Daisy said, "I did beautifully," though she cried because I put my foot on her lace flounce and tore it; and I noticed that after that she always had some good reason why I should not dance again. "It was too hard work for me; I was too big and clumsy," she said, "and would tire easily. Cousin Tom was big, and he never danced."

By the way, I have some little curiosity with regard to that Cousin Tom who wanted Daisy so badly, and who, because she refused him, went off to South America. I trust he will stay there. Not that I am or could be jealous of Daisy, but it is better for cousins like Tom to keep away.

Daisy is very happy here, though she is not quite as enthusiastic over the place as I supposed she would be, knowing how she lived at home. The McDonalds are intensely respectable, so she says; but her father's practice cannot bring him over two thousand a year, and the small brown house they live in, with only a grass-plot in the rear and at the side, is not to be compared with Elmwood, which is a fine old place, every one admits. It has come out gradually that she thought the house was brick and had a tower and billiard-room, and that we kept a great many servants and had a fish-pond on the premises, and velvet carpets on every floor. I would not let Fan know this for the world, as I want her to like Daisy thoroughly.

And she does like her, though this little pink and white pet of mine is a new revelation to her, and puzzles



her amazingly. She would have been glad if I had married Julia Hamilton, of Boston; but those Boston girls are too strong-minded and positive to suit me. Julia is nice, it is true, and pretty, and highly educated, and Fan says she has brains and would make a splendid wife. As Fan had never seen Daisy she did not, of course, mean to hint that she had not brains, but I suspect even now she would be better pleased if Julia were here, but I should not. Julia is self-reliant; Daisy is not. Julia has opinions of her own and asserts them, too; Daisy does not. Julia can sew and run a machine; Daisy cannot. Julia gets up in the morning and goes to bed at night; Daisy does neither. Nobody ever waits for Julia; everybody waits for Daisy. Julia reads scientific works and dotes on metaphysics; Daisy does not know the meaning of the word. In short, Julia is a strong, high-toned, energetic, independent woman, while Daisy is—a little innocent, confiding girl, whom I would rather have without brains than all the Boston women like Julia with brains.

And yet I sometimes wish she did care for books, and was more interested in what interests me. I have tried reading aloud to her an hour every evening, but she generally goes to sleep or steals up behind me to look over my shoulder and see how near I am to the end of the chapter, and when I reach it she says: "Excuse me, but I have just thought of something I must tell Zillah about the dress I want to wear to-morrow. I'll be back in a moment;" and off she goes and our reading is ended for that time, for I notice she never returns. The dress is of

more importance than the book, and I find her at ten or eleven trying to decide whether black or white or blue is most becoming to her. Poor Daisy ! I fear she had no proper training at home. Indeed, she told me the other day that from her earliest recollection she had been taught that the main object of her life was to marry young and to marry money. Of course she did not mean anything, but I would rather she had not said it, even though I know she refused a millionaire for me who can hardly be called rich as riches are rated these days. If Dick Trevylian should fail to meet his payment I should be very poor, and then what would become of Daisy, to whom the luxuries which money buys are so necessary.

[Here followed several other entries in the journal, consisting mostly of rhapsodies on Daisy, and then came the following :]

*December 15th, 18—.*

Dick *has* failed to meet his payments, and that too after having borrowed of me twenty thousand more ! Is he a villain, and did he know all the time that I was ruining myself ? I cannot think so when I remember the look on his face as he told me about it and swore to me solemnly that up to the very last he fully expected relief from England, where he thought he had a fortune.

"If I live I will pay you sometime," he said ; but that does not help me now. I am a ruined man. Elmwood must be sold, and I must work like a dog to earn my daily bread. For myself I would not mind it much, and Fan, who, womanlike, saw it in the distance and warned me of it, behaves nobly ; but it falls hard on Daisy.

Poor Daisy! She never said a word when I told her the exact truth, but she went to bed and cried for one whole day. I am so glad I settled ten thousand dollars on her when we were married. No one can touch that and I told her so; but she did not say a word or seem to know what I meant. Talking of anything serious, or expressing her opinion, was never in her line, and she has not of her own accord spoken with me on the subject, and when I try to talk with her about our future she shudders and cries, and says, "Please don't! I can't bear it! I want to go home to mother!"

And so it is settled that while we are arranging matters she is to visit her mother and perhaps not return till spring, when I hope to be in a better condition financially than I am at present.

One thing Daisy said, which hurt me cruelly, and that was: "If I must be a poor man's wife I might as well have married Cousin Tom, who wanted me so badly!" To do her justice, however, she added immediately: "But I like you the best."

I am glad she said that. It will be something to remember when she is gone, or rather when I return without her, as I am going to Indianapolis with her, and then back to the dreary business of seeing what I have left and what I can do. I have an offer for the house, and shall sell it at once; but where my home will be next I do not know, neither would I care so much if it were not for Daisy,—poor little Daisy!—who thought she had married a rich man. The only tears I have shed over my lost fortune were for her. Oh, Daisy, Daisy!

## CHAPTER III.

## EXTRACTS FROM DAISY'S JOURNAL.

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ELMWOOD, *September 20, 18—.*

DAISY McDONALD THORNTON'S journal,—presented by my husband, Mr. Guy Thornton, who wishes me to write something in it every day ; and who, when I asked him what I should write, said: "Your thoughts, and opinions, and experiences. It will be pleasant for you sometimes to look back upon your early married life and see what progress you have made since then, and will help you to recall incidents you would otherwise forget. A journal fixes things in your mind, and I know you will enjoy it, especially as no one is to see it, and you can talk to it freely as to a friend."

That is what Guy said, and I wrote it right down to copy into the book as a kind of preface or introduction. I am not much pleased with having to keep a journal, and maybe I shall coax Zillah to keep it for me. I don't care to *fix* things in my mind. I don't like things *fixed*, anyway. I'd rather they would lie round loose, as they surely would, if I had not Zillah to pick them up. She is a treasure, and it is almost worth being married to have a waiting-maid,—and that reminds me that I may as well begin back at the time when I was not married,

and did not want to be either, if we had not been so poor, and obliged to make so many shifts to keep up appearances and seem richer than we were.

My maiden name was Margaret McDonald, and I am seventeen next New Year's Day. My father is of Scotch descent, and a lawyer; my mother was a Barnard, from New Orleans, and has some very good blood in her veins. I am an only child, and very handsome,—so everybody says; and I should know it if they did not say it, for can't I see myself in the glass? And still I really do not care so much for my good looks except as they serve to attain the end for which father says I was born.

Almost the first thing I can remember is of his telling me that I must marry young and marry rich, and I promised him I would, provided I could stay at home with mother just the same after I was married. Another thing I remember, which made a lasting impression, and that is the beating father gave me for asking before some grand people staying at our house, "Why we did not always have beefsteak and hot muffins for breakfast, instead of baked potatoes and bread and butter?"

I must learn to keep my mouth shut, he said, and not tell all I knew; and I profited by the lesson, and that is one reason, I suppose, why I so rarely say what I think or express an opinion either favorable or otherwise.

I do not believe I am deceitful, though all my life I have seen my parents try to seem what they are not; that is try to seem like rich people, when sometimes father's practice brought him only a few hundreds a year, and there was mother and myself and Tom to support. Tom is my

cousin,—Tom McDonald,—who lived with us and fell in love with me, though I never tried to make him. But I liked him ever so much, even if he did use to tease me horridly, and put horn-bugs in my shoes, and worms on my neck, and Jack-o'-lanterns in my room, and tip me off his sled into the snow; for with all his teasing, he had a great, kind, unselfish heart, and I shall never forget that look on his face when I told him I could not be his wife. I did not like him as he liked me, and I did not want to be married any way. I could not bear the thought of being tied up to some man, and if I did marry it must be to somebody who was rich. That was in Chicago, and the night before Tom started for South America, where he was going to make his fortune, and he wanted me to promise to wait for him, and said no one could ever love me as well as he did.

I could not promise, because even if he had all the gold mines in Peru, I did not care to spend my days with him,—to see him morning, noon and night, and all the time. It is a good deal to ask of a woman, and I told him so, and he cried so hard,—not loud but in a pitiful kind of way, which hurt me cruelly. I hear that sobbing sometimes now in my sleep, and it's like the moan of the wind round that house on the prairie where Tom's mother died. Poor Tom! I gave him a lock of my hair and let him kiss me twice, and then he went away, and after that old Judge Burton offered himself and his million to me; but I could not endure his bald head a week, I should hate him awfully and I told him no; and when father seemed sorry and said I missed it, I told him I would not sell

myself for gold alone,—I'd run away first and go after Tom, who was young and just bearable. Then Guy Thornton came, and—and—well he took me by storm, and I liked him better than any one I had ever seen, though I would rather have him for my friend,—my beau, whom I could order around and get rid of when I pleased, but I married him. Everybody said he was rich, and father was satisfied and gave his consent, and bought me a most elaborate trousseau. I wondered then where the money came from. Now, I know that *Tom* sent it. He has been very successful with his mine, and in a letter to father sent me a check for fifteen hundred dollars. Father would not tell me that, but mother did, and I felt worse, I think, than when I heard the sobbing. Poor Tom! I never wear one of the dresses now without thinking who paid for it and wrote in his letter, "I am working like an ox for Daisy." Poor Tom!

*October 1st, 18—.*

I rather like writing in my journal after all, for here I can say what I think, and I guess I shall not let Zillah make the entries. Where did I leave off? Oh, about poor Tom.

I have had a letter from him. He had just heard of my marriage, and only said, "God bless you, my darling little Daisy, and may you be very happy."

I burned the letter up and cried myself into a headache. I wish people would not love me so much. I do not deserve it, for I know I am not what they think me to be. There's Guy, my husband, more to be pitied than



Tom, because, you see, he has got me ; and privately, between you and me, old journal, I am not worth the getting, and I know it perhaps better than any one else. I do not think I am really mean or bad, but there certainly is in my make-up something different from other women. I like Guy and believe him to be the best man in the world, and I would rather he kissed me than Tom, but do not want any body to kiss me, especially a man, and Guy is so affectionate, and his great hands are so hot, and muss my fluted dresses so terribly.

I guess I don't like to be married anyway. If one only could have the house, and the money, and the nice things without the husband ! That's wicked, of course, when Guy is so kind and loves me so much. I wish he didn't, but I would not for the world let him know how I feel. I did tell him that I was not the wife he ought to have, but he would not believe me, and father was anxious, and so I married him, meaning to do the best I could. It was splendid at Saratoga, only Guy danced so ridiculously and would not let me waltz with those young men. As if I cared a straw for them or any body besides Guy and Tom !

It is very pleasant here at Elmwood, but the house is not as grand as I supposed, and there are not as many servants, and the family carriage is awful pokey. Guy is to give me a pretty little phaeton on my birthday.

I like Miss Frances very much, only she is such a raging housekeeper, and keeps me all the while on the alert. I don't believe in these raging housekeepers who act as if they wanted to make the bed before you are up,



and eat breakfast before it is ready. I don't like to get up in the morning any way, and I don't like to hurry, and I am always behind, and keeping somebody waiting and that disturbs the people here very much. Miss Frances seems really cross sometimes, and even Guy looks sober and disturbed when he has waited for me half an hour or more. I guess I must try and do better, for both Guy and Miss Frances are as kind as they can be, but then I am not one bit like them, and have never been accustomed to anything like order and regularity. At home things came round any time, and I came with them, and that suited me better than being married, only now I have a kind of settled feeling, and am Mrs. Guy Thornton, and Guy is good looking, and highly esteemed, and very learned, and I can see that the young ladies in the neighborhood envy me for being his wife. I wonder who is that Julia Hamilton, Miss Frances talks about so much, and why Guy did not marry her instead of me. She is very learned, and gets up in the morning and flies round and is always ready, and reads scientific articles in the *Fortnightly Review*, and teaches in Sunday-school, and thinks it wicked to waltz, and likes to discuss all the mixed-up horrid questions of the day,—religion and politics and science and everything. I asked Guy once why he did not marry her instead of a little goose like me, and he said he liked the little goose the best, and then kissed me, and crumpled my white dress all up. Poor Guy! I wish I did love him as well as he does me, but it's not in me to love any body very much.

*December 20th, 18—.*

A horrible thing has happened, and I have married a poor man after all! Guy signed for somebody and had to pay, and Elmwood must be sold, and we are to move into a stuffy little house, without Zillah, and with but one girl, and I shall have to take care of my own room as I did at home, and make my own bed and pick up my things and shall never be ready for dinner. It is too dreadful to think about, and I was sick for a week after Guy told me of it. I might as well have married Tom, only I like Guy the best. He looks so sorry and sad that I sometimes forget myself to pity him. I am going home to mother for a long, long time—all winter may be,—and and I shall enjoy it so much. Guy says I have ten thousand dollars of my own, and the interest on that will buy my dresses, I guess, and get something for Miss Frances, too. She is a noble woman, and tries to bear up so bravely. She says they will keep the furniture of my blue room for me, if I want it; and I do, and I mean to have Guy send it to Indianapolis, if he will. Oh, mother, I am so glad I am coming back, where I can do exactly as I like, eat my breakfast on the washstand if I choose, and sit up all night long. I almost wish,—no, I don't either. I like Guy ever so much. It's being tied up that I don't like.



## CHAPTER IV.

AUTHOR'S STORY.

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GUY THORNTON was not a fool, and Daisy was not a fool, though they have thus far appeared to great disadvantage. Both had made a mistake ; Guy in marrying a child whose mind was unformed ; and Daisy in marrying at all, when her whole nature was in revolt against matrimony. But the mistake was made, and Guy had failed and Daisy was going home, and the New Year's morning when she was to have received Guy's gift of the phaeton and ponies, found her at the little cottage in Indianapolis, where she at once resumed all the old indolent habits of her girlhood, and was happier than she had been since leaving home as a bride.

On Mr. McDonald, the news of his son-in-law's failure fell like a thunderbolt and affected him more than it did Daisy. Shrewd, ambitious and scheming, he had for years planned for his daughter a moneyed marriage, and now she was returned upon his hands for an indefinite time, with her naturally luxurious tastes intensified by recent indulgence, and her husband a ruined man. It was not a pleasant picture to contemplate, and Mr. McDonald's face was cloudy and thoughtful for many days, until a letter from Tom turned his thoughts into a new

channel and sent him with fresh avidity to certain points of law with which he had of late years been familiar. If there was one part of his profession in which he excelled more than another it was in the divorce cases which had made Indiana so notorious. Squire McDonald, as he was called, was well known to that class of people who, utterly ignoring God's command, seek to free themselves from the bonds which once were so pleasant to wear, and as he sat alone in his office with Tom's letter in his hand, and read how rapidly that young man was getting rich, there came into his mind a plan, the very thought of which would have made Guy Thornton shudder with horror and disgust.

Daisy had not been altogether satisfied with her brief married life, and it would be very easy to make her more dissatisfied, especially as the home to which she would return must necessarily be very different from Elmwood. Tom was destined to be a millionaire. There was no doubt of that, and he could be moulded and managed as Mr. McDonald had never been able to mould or manage Guy. But everything pertaining to Tom must be kept carefully out of sight, for the man knew his daughter would never lend herself to such a diabolical scheme as that which he was revolving, and which he at once put in progress, managing so adroitly that before Daisy was at all aware of what she was doing, she found herself the heroine of a divorce suit, founded really upon nothing but a general dissatisfaction with married life, and a wish to be free from it. Something there was about incompatibility of temperament and uncongeniality and all that kind of thing which wicked men and women parade before

the world when weary of the tie which God has said shall not be torn asunder.

It is not our intention to follow the suit through any of its details, and we shall only say that it progressed rapidly, while poor unsuspecting Guy was working hard to retrieve in some way his lost fortune, and to fit up a pleasant home for the childish wife who was drifting away from him. He had missed her so much at first, even while he felt it a relief to have her gone when his business matters needed all his time and thought. It was some comfort to write to her, but not much to receive her letters, for Daisy did not excel in epistolary composition, and after a few weeks her letters were short and far apart, and, as Guy thought, constrained and studied in their tone, and when, after she had been absent from him for three months or more his longing to see her was so great that he decided upon a visit of a few days to the West, and apprized her of his intention, asking if she would be glad to see him, he received in reply a telegram from Mr. McDonald telling him to defer his journey as Daisy was visiting some friends and would be absent for an indefinite length of time. There was but one more letter from her, and that was dated at Vincennes, and merely said that she was well, and Guy must not feel anxious about her or take the trouble to come to see her, as she knew how valuable his time must be, and would far rather he should devote himself to his business than bother about her. The letter was signed, "Hastily, Daisy," and Guy read it over many times with a pang in his heart he could not define.

But he had no suspicion of the terrible blow in store

for him, and went on planning for her comfort just the same ; and when at last Elmwood was sold and he could no longer stay there, he hired a more expensive house than he could afford, because he thought Daisy would like it better, and then, with his sister Frances, set himself to the pleasant task of fitting it up for Daisy. There was a blue room with a bay window just as there had been in Elmwood, only it was not so pretentious and large. But it was very pleasant, and had a door opening out upon what Guy meant should be a flower garden in the summer, and though he missed his little wife sadly, and longed so much at times for a sight of her beautiful face and the sound of her sweet voice, he put all thought of himself aside and said he would not bring her back until the May flowers were in blossom and the young grass bright and green by the blue room door.

"She will have a better impression of her new home then," he said to his sister, "and I want her to be happy here and not feel the change too keenly."

Julia Hamilton chanced to be in town staying at the Towers, and as she was very intimate with Miss Thornton the two were a great deal together, and it thus came about that Julia was often at the brown cottage and helped to settle the blue room for Daisy.

"If it were only you who was to occupy it," Frances said to her one morning when they had been reading together for an hour or more in the room they both thought so pretty. "I like Daisy, but somehow she seems so far from me. Why, there's not a sentiment in common between us."

Then, as if sorry for having said so much, she spoke

of Daisy's marvelous beauty and winning ways, and hoped Julia would know and love her ere long, and possibly do her good.

It so happened that Guy was sometimes present at these readings and enjoyed them so much that there insensibly crept into his heart a wish that Daisy was more like the Boston girl whom he had mentally termed strong-minded and stiff.

"And in time, perhaps, she may be," he thought. "I mean to have Julia here a great deal next summer, and with two such women for companions as Julia and Fan, Daisy cannot help but improve."

And so at last, when the house was settled and the early spring flowers were in bloom, Guy started westward for his wife. He had not seen her now for months, and it was more than two weeks since he had heard from her, and his heart beat high with joyful anticipation as he thought just how she would look when she came to him, shyly and coyly, as she always did, with that droop in her eye-lids and that pink flush in her cheeks. He would chide her a little at first, he said, for having been so poor a correspondent, especially of late, and after that he would love her so much, and shield her so tenderly from every want or care that she should never feel the difference in his fortune.

Poor Guy,—he little dreamed what was in store for him just inside the door where he stood ringing one morning in May, and which, when at last it was opened, shut in a very different man from the one who went through it three hours later, benumbed and half-crazed with bewilderment and surprise.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE DIVORCE.

HE had expected to meet Daisy in the hall, but she was not in sight, and her mother, who appeared in response to the card he had sent up, seemed confused and unnatural to such a degree that Guy asked in some alarm if anything had happened, and where Daisy was.

Nothing had happened,—that is,—well, nothing was the matter with Daisy, Mrs. McDonald said, only she was nervous and not feeling quite well that morning, and thought she had better not come down. They were not expecting him so soon, she continued, and she regretted exceedingly that her husband was not there, but she had sent for him, and hoped he would come immediately. Had Mr. Thornton been to breakfast?

He had been to breakfast, and he did not understand at all what she meant; if Daisy could not come to him, he must go to her, he said, and he started for the door, when Mrs. McDonald sprang forward, and laying her hand on his arm, held him back, saying:

“Wait, Mr. Thornton: wait till husband comes—to tell you——.”

“To tell me what!” Guy demanded, feeling sure now that something had befallen Daisy.



"Tell you—that—that—Daisy is,—that he has,—that—oh, believe me, it was not my wish at all, and I don't know why it was done," Mrs. McDonald said, still trying to detain Guy and keep him in the room.

But her efforts were vain, for shaking off her grasp, Guy opened the hall door, and with a cry of joy caught Daisy herself in his arms.

In a state of fearful excitement and very curious to know what was passing between her mother and Guy, she had stolen down stairs to listen, and had reached the door just as Guy opened it so suddenly.

"Daisy, darling, I feared you were sick," he cried, nearly smothering her with his caresses.

But Daisy writhed herself away from him, and putting up her hands to keep him off, cried out:

"Oh, Guy, Guy, you can't,—you mustn't. You must never kiss me again or love me any more, because I am,—I am not,—Oh, Guy, I wish you had never seen me; I am so sorry, too. I did like you. I,—I,—Guy,—Guy,—I am not your wife any more! Father has got a divorce!"

She whispered the last words, and then, affrighted at the expression of Guy's face, fled half way up the stairs, where she stood looking down upon him, while with a face as white as ashes, he, too, stood gazing at her and trying to frame the words which should ask her what she meant. He did not believe her literally; the idea was too preposterous, but he felt that something horrible had come between him and Daisy,—that in some way she was as much lost to him as if he had found her confined for the

grave, and the suddenness of the blow took from him for a moment his power of speech, and he still stood looking at her when the street door opened, and a new actor appeared upon the scene in the person of Mr. McDonald, who had hastened home in obedience to the message from his wife.

It was a principle of Mr. McDonald never to lose his presence of mind or his temper, or the smooth, low tone of voice he had cultivated years ago and practiced with so good effect.

And now, though he understood the state of matters at once and knew that Guy had heard the worst, he did not seem ruffled in the slightest degree, and his voice was just as kind and sweet as ever as he bade Guy good-morning, and advanced to take his hand. But Guy would not take it. He had always disliked and distrusted Mr. McDonald, and he felt intuitively that whatever harm had befallen him had come through the oily-tongued man who stood smilingly before him. With a gesture of disgust he turned away from the offered hand, and in a voice husky with suppressed excitement, asked :

"What does all this mean, that when, after a separation of months, I come for my wife, I am told that she is not my wife,—that there has been a—a divorce?"

Guy had brought himself to name the horrid thing, and the very sound of the word served to make it more real and clear to his mind, and there were great drops of sweat upon his forehead and about his mouth as he asked what it meant.

"Oh, Guy, don't feel so badly. Tell him, father, I did

not do it," Daisy cried, as she stood leaning over the stair-rail looking down at the wretched man.

"Daisy, go to your room. You should not have seen him at all," Mr. McDonald said, with more sternness of manner than was usual for him.

Then, turning to Guy, he continued :

"Come in here, Mr Thornton, where we can be alone while I explain to you what seems so mysterious now."

They went together into the little parlor, and for half an hour or more the sound of their voices was distinctly heard as Mr. McDonald tried to explain what there really was no explanation or excuse for. Daisy was not contented at Elmwood, and though she complained of nothing she was not happy as a married woman, and was glad to be free again. That was all, and Guy understood at last that Daisy was his no longer ; that the law which was a disgrace to the State in which it existed had divorced him from his wife without his knowledge or consent, and for no other reason than incompatibility of temperament, and a desire on Daisy's part to be free from the marriage tie. Not a word had been said of Guy's altered fortunes, but he felt that his comparative poverty was really the cause of this great wrong, and for a few moments resentment and indignation prevailed over every other feeling ; then, when he remembered the little blue-eyed, innocent-faced girl whom he had loved so much and thought so good and true, he laid his head upon the sofa-arm and groaned bitterly, while the man who had ruined him sat coolly by, citing to him many similar cases where divorces had been procured without the knowledge of the absent party. It

was a common—a very common thing, he said, and reflected no disgrace where there was no criminal charge. Daisy was too young and childish anyway, and ought not to have been married for several years, and it was really quite as much a favor to Guy as a wrong. He was free again,—free to marry if he liked,—he had taken care to see to that, so——

“Stop!” Guy thundered out, rousing himself from his crouching attitude upon the sofa. “There is a point beyond which you shall not go. Be satisfied with taking Daisy from me, and do not insult me with talk of a second marriage. Had I found Daisy dead it would have hurt me less than this fearful wrong you have done. I say *you*, for I charge it all to *you*. Daisy could have had no part in it, and I ask to see her and hear from her own lips that she accepts the position in which you and your diabolical laws have placed her before I am willing to give her up. Call her will you?”

“No, Mr. Thornton,” Mr. McDonald replied. “To see Daisy would be useless, and only excite you more than you are excited now. You cannot see her.”

“Yes he will, father. If Guy wants to see me, he shall.”

It was Daisy herself who spoke, and who a second time had been acting the part of a listener. Going up to Guy she knelt down beside him, and laying her arms across his lap, said to him:

“What is it, Guy; what is it you wish to say to me?”

The sight of her before him in all her girlish beauty, with that soft, sweet expression on the face raised so

timidly to his, unmanned Guy entirely, and clasping her in his arms he wept passionately for a moment, while he tried to say :

“ Oh, Daisy, my darling, tell me it is a horrid dream,—tell me you are still my wife, and go with me to the home I have tried to make so pleasant for your sake. It is not like Elmwood, but I will sometime have one handsomer even than that, and I’ll work so hard for you. Oh, Daisy, tell me you are sorry for the part you had in this fearful business, if indeed you had a part, and I’ll take you back so gladly. Will you, Daisy ; will you be my wife once more ? I shall never ask you again. This is your last chance with me. Reflect before you throw it away.”

Guy’s mood was changing a little, because of something he saw in Daisy’s face,—a drawing back from him when he spoke of marriage.

“ Daisy must not go back with you ; I shall not suffer that,” Mr. McDonald said, while Daisy, still keeping her arms around Guy’s neck, where she had put them when he drew her to him, replied :

“ Oh, Guy ! I can’t go with you ; but I shall like you always, and I’m sorry for you. I never wanted to be married ; but if I must, I’d better have married *Tom*, or that old Chicago man ; they would not have felt so badly, and I’d rather hurt them than you.”

The utter childishness of the remark roused Guy, and with a gesture of impatience, he put her from him, and rising to his feet, said angrily :

“ This, then, is your decision, and I accept it ; but Daisy, if you have in you a spark of true womanhood, you will

some time be sorry for this day's work ; while *you !*" and he turned fiercely upon Mr. McDonald,—“ words cannot express the contempt I feel for you ; and know, too, that I understand you fully, and am certain that were I the rich man I was when you gave your daughter to me, you would not have taken her away. But I will waste no more words upon you. You are a *villain !* and Daisy is”——His white lips quivered a little as he hesitated a moment, and then added : “ Daisy *was* my wife.”

Then, without another word, he left the house, and never turned to see the white, frightened face which looked after him so wistfully until a turn in the street hid him from view.



## CHAPTER VI.

## EXTRACTS FROM DIARIES.

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*Extract 1st.—Mr. McDonald's.*

*May ———.*

WELL, that matter is over, and I can't say I am sorry, for the expression in that Thornton's eye I do not care to meet a second time. There was mischief in it, and it made one think of six-shooters and cold lead. I never quite indorsed the man,—first, because he was not as rich as I would like Daisy's husband to be; and second, because even had he been a millionaire it would have done *me* no good. That he did not marry Daisy's family, he made me fully understand; and for any good his money did me, I was as poor after the marriage as before. Then he must needs lose all he had in that foolish way; and when I found that Daisy was not exceedingly in love with married life, it was natural that, as her father, I should take advantage of the laws of the State in which I live, especially as *Tom* is growing rich so fast. On the whole, I have done a good thing. Daisy is free, with ten thousand dollars which Thornton settled on her; for, of course, I shall prevent her giving that back as she is determined to do, saying it is not hers, and she will not keep



it. It is hers, and she shall keep it, and Tom will be a millionaire if that gold mine proves as great a success as it seems likely to do; and I can manage Tom, only I am sorry for Thornton who evidently was in love with Daisy; and, as I said before, I've done a nice thing after all.

*Extract 2nd.—Miss Thornton's Diary.*

*June 30th, 18—.*

To-day, for the first time, we have hopes that my brother will live; but, oh! how near he has been to the gates of death since that night when he came back to us from the west, with a fearful look on his face, and a cruel wound in his heart. I say us, for Julia Hamilton has been with me all through the dreadful days and nights when I watched to see Guy's life go out and know I was left alone. She was with me when I was getting ready for Daisy, and waiting for Guy to bring her home,—not to Elmwood,—that dear old place is sold, and strangers walk the rooms I love so well,—but here to the brown cottage on the hill, which, if I had never had Elmwood, would seem so pleasant to me.

And it is pleasant here, especially in Daisy's room, which we shall never use, for the door is shut and bolted, and it seems each time I pass it as if a dead body were lying hidden there. Had Guy died I would have laid him there and sent for that false creature to come and see her work. I promised her so much, but not from any love, for my heart was full of bitterness that night when I turned her from the door out into the rain. I shall never



tell Guy that, lest he should soften toward her, and I would not have her here again for all the world contains. And yet I did like her, and was looking forward to her return with a good deal of pleasure. Julia had spoken many a kind word for her, had pleaded her extreme youth as an excuse for her faults, and had led me to hope for better things when time had matured her somewhat and she had become accustomed to our new mode of life.

And so I waited for her and Guy, and wondered I did not hear from them, and felt so glad and happy when I received the telegram, "Shall be home to-night." It was a bright day in May, but the evening set in cool, with a feeling of rain in the air, and I had a fire kindled in the parlor and in Daisy's room, for I remember how she used to crouch on the rug before the grate and watch the blaze floating up the chimney with all the eagerness of a child. Then, although it hurt me sorely, I went to Simpson, who bought our carriage, and asked that it might be sent to the station so that Daisy should not feel the difference at once. And Jerry, our old coachman, went with it, and waited there just as Julia and I waited at home, for Julia had promised to stay a few days on purpose to see Daisy.

The train was late that night, an hour behind time, and the spring rain was falling outside and the gas was lighted within when I heard the sound of wheels stopping at the door and went to meet my brother. But only my brother. There was no Daisy with him. He came in alone, with such an awful look on his white face as made me cry out with alarm.

"What is it, Guy, and where is Daisy?" I asked, as he staggered against the bannister, where he leaned heavily.

He did not answer my question, but said, "Take me to my room," in a voice I would never have known for Guy's. I took him to his room and made him lie down, and brought him a glass of wine, and then, when he was strong enough to tell it, listened to the shameful story, and felt that henceforth and forever I must and would hate the woman who had wounded my Guy so cruelly.

And still there is some good in her,—some sense of right and justice, as was shown by what she did when Guy was at the worst of the terrible fever which followed his coming home. I watched him constantly. I would not even let Julia Hamilton share my vigils, and one night when I was worn out with fatigue and anxiety I fell asleep upon the lounge, where I threw myself for a moment. How long I slept I never knew, but it must have been an hour or more, for the last thing I remember was hearing the whistle of the Western train and the distant sound of thunder as if a storm were coming, and when I awoke the rain was falling heavily and the clock was striking twelve, which was an hour after the train was due. It was very quiet in the room, and darker than usual, for some one had shaded the lamp from my eyes as well as Guy's, so that at first I did not see distinctly, but I had an impression that there was a figure sitting by Guy near the bed. Julia most likely, I thought, and I called her by name, feeling my blood curdle in my veins and my heart stand still with something like fear when a voice I knew so well and never expected to hear again, answered softly:

"It is not Julia. *It's I.*"

There was no faltering in her voice, no sound of apology. She spoke like one who had a right to be there, and this it was which so enraged me and made me lose my self-command. Starting to my feet, I confronted her as she sat in my chair, by Guy's bed-side, with those queer blue eyes of hers fixed so questioningly upon me as if she wondered at my impertinence.

"*Miss McDonald,*" I said, laying great stress on the name, "why are you here, and how did you dare come?"

"I *was* almost afraid, it was so dark when I left the train, and it kept thundering so," she replied, mistaking my meaning altogether, "but there was no conveyance at the station and so I came on alone. I never knew Guy was sick. Why did you not write and tell me? Is he very bad?"

Her perfect composure and utter ignoring of the past provoked me beyond endurance, and without stopping to think what I was doing, I seized her arm, and drawing her into an adjoining room, said, in a suppressed whisper of rage:

"Very bad,—I should think so. We have feared and still fear he will die, and it's all your work, the result of your wickedness, and yet you presume to come here into his very room,—you who are no wife of his, and no woman either, to do what you have done."

What more I said I do not remember. I only know Daisy put her hands to her head in a scared, helpless way, and said:

"I do not quite understand it all, or what you wish me to do."

"Do?" I replied. "I want you to leave this house immediately,—*now*, before Guy can possibly be harmed by your presence. Go back to the depot and take the next train home. It is due in an hour. You have time to reach it."

"But it is so dark, and it rains and thunders so," she said, with a shudder, as a heavy peal shook the house and the rain beat against the windows.

I think I must have been crazy with mad excitement, and her answer made me worse.

"You were not afraid to come here," I said. "You can go from here as well. Thunder will not hurt such as you."

Even then she did not move, but crouched in a corner of the room farthest from me, reminding me of my kitten when I try to drive it from a place where it has been permitted to play. As that will not understand my *'scats* and gestures so she did not seem to comprehend my meaning. But I made her at last, and with a very white face and a strange look in her great staring blue eyes, she said:

"Fanny," (she always called me Miss Frances before). "Fanny, do you really mean me to go back in the dark, and the rain and the thunder? Then I will, but I must tell you first what I came for, and you will tell Guy. He gave me ten thousand dollars when we first were married; settled it on me, they called it, and father was one of the trustees, and kept the paper for me till I was of age. So much I understand, but not why I can't give it back to Guy, for father says I can't. I never dreamed it was mine after the—the—the divorce."

She spoke the word softly and hesitatingly, while a faint flush showed on her otherwise white face.

"If I am not Guy's wife, as they say, then I have no right to his money, and I told father so, and said I'd give it back, and he said I couldn't, and I said I could and would, and I wrote to Guy about it, and told him I was not so mean, and father kept the letter, and I did not know what I should do next till I was invited to visit Aunt Merriman in Detroit. Then I took the paper,—the *settlement*, you know, from the box where father kept it, and put it in my pocket; here it is; see—" and she drew out a document and held it toward me while she continued: "I started for Detroit under the care of a friend who stopped a few miles the other side, so you see I was free to come here if I liked, and I did so, for I wanted to see Guy and give him the paper, and tell him I'd never take a cent of his money. I am sorry he is sick. I did not think he'd care so much, and I don't know what to do with the paper unless I tear it up. I believe I'd better; then surely it will be out of the way."

And before I could speak or think she tore the document in two, and then across again, and scattered the four pieces on the floor.

"Tell Guy, please," she continued, "what I have done, and that I never meant to take it, after—after—*that*,—you know,—and that I did not care for money only as father taught me I must have it, and that I am sorry he ever saw me, and I never really wanted to be married and can't be his wife again till I do."

She spoke as if Guy would take her back of course if

she only signified her wish to come, and this kept me angry, though I was beginning to soften a little with this unexpected phase of her character, and I might have suffered her to stay till morning if she had signified a wish to do so, but she did not.

"I suppose I must go now if I catch the train," she said, moving toward the door. "Good-bye, Fanny. I am sorry I ever troubled you."

She held her little white ungloved hand toward me and then I came to myself, and hearing the wind and rain, and remembering the lonely road to the station, I said to her :

"Stay, Daisy, I cannot let you go alone. Miss Hamilton will watch with Guy while I go with you."

"And who will come back with you ? It will be just as dark and rainy then," she said ; but she made no objection to my plan, and in less than five minutes Julia, who always slept in her dressing-gown so as to be ready for any emergency, was sitting by Guy, and I was out in the dark night with Daisy and our watch-dog Leo, who, at sight of his old playmate, had leaped upon her and nearly knocked her down in his joy.

"Leo is glad to see me," Daisy said, patting the dumb creature's head, and in her voice there was a rebuking tone, which I resented silently.

I was not glad to see her, and I could not act a part, but I wrapped my waterproof around her and adjusted the hood over her hair, and thought how beautiful she was, even in that disfiguring garb, and then we went on our way, the young creature clinging close to me as peal

after peal of thunder rolled over our heads, and gleams of lightning lit up the inky sky. She did not speak to me, nor I to her, till the red light on the track was in sight, and we knew the train was coming. Then she asked timidly: "Do you think Guy will die?"

"Heaven only knows," I said, checking a strong impulse to add: "If he does, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you killed him."

I am glad now that I did not say it. And I was glad then, when Daisy, alarmed perhaps by something in the tone of my voice, repeated her question:

"But do *you* think he will die? If I thought he would I should wish to die too. I like him, Miss Frances, better than any one I ever saw; like him now as well as I ever did, but I do not want to be his wife, nor anybody's wife, and that is just the truth. I am sorry he ever saw me and loved me so well. Tell him that Fanny."

It was Fanny again, and she grasped my hand nervously, for the train was upon us.

"Promise me solemnly that if you think he is surely going to die you will let me know in time to see him once more. Promise,—quick,—and kiss me as a pledge."

The train had stopped. There was not a moment to lose, and I promised, and kissed the red lips in the darkness, and felt a remorseful pang when I saw the little figure go alone into the car which bore her swiftly away, while I turned my steps homeward with only Leo for my companion.

I had to tell Julia about it, and I gathered up the four



scraps of paper from the floor where Daisy had thrown them, and joining them together saw they really were the marriage settlement, and kept them for Guy, should he ever be able to hear about it and know what it meant. There was a telegram for me, the next evening, dated at Detroit, and bearing simply the words, "Arrived safely," and that was all I heard of Daisy. No one in town knew of her having been here but Julia and myself, and it was better that they should not, for Guy's life hung on a thread, and for many days and nights I trembled lest that promise, sealed by a kiss, would have to be redeemed.

That was three weeks ago, and Guy is better now and knows us all, and to-day, for the first time, I have a strong hope that I am not to be left alone, and I thank Heaven for that hope, and feel as if I were at peace with all the world, even with Daisy herself, from whom I have heard nothing since that brief telegram.

*August 1st, —.*

The shadow of death has passed from our house, and I can almost say the shadow of sickness too, for though Guy is still weak as a child and thin as a ghost, he is decidedly on the gain, and to-day I drove him out for the third time, and hoped from something he said that he was beginning to feel some interest in the life so kindly given back to him. Still he will never be just the same. The blow stunned him too completely for him to recover quite his old happy manner, and there is a look of age in his face which pains me to see. He knows Daisy has

been here, and why. I had to tell him all about it, and sooner too than I meant to, for almost his first coherent question to me after his reason came back was :

"Where is Daisy ? I am sure I heard her voice. It could not have been a dream. Is she here, or has she been here ? Tell me the truth, Fanny."

So I told him, and showed him the bits of paper, and held his head on my bosom, while he cried like a child. How he loves her still, and how glad he was to know that she was not as mercenary as it would at first seem. Not that her tearing up that paper will make any difference about the money. She cannot give it to him, he says, until she is of age, neither does he wish it at all, and he would not take it from her ; but he is glad to see her disposition in the matter ; glad to have me think better of her than I did, and I am certain that he is expecting to hear from her every day, and is disappointed that he does not. He did not reproach me as I thought he would when I told him about turning her out in the rain ; he only said :

"Poor Daisy, did she get very wet ? She is so delicate, you know. I hope it did not make her sick."

Oh, the love a man will feel for a woman, let her be ever so unworthy. I cannot comprehend it. And why should I ? an old maid like me, who never loved any one but Guy.

*August 30th, —.*

In a roundabout way we have heard that Mr. McDonald is going away with his wife and daughter. When

the facts of the divorce were known, they brought him into such disgrace with the citizens of Indianapolis, who were perfectly indignant, and showed that they were in every possible way, that he thought best to leave for a time till the storm was over, and so they will go to South America, where there is a cousin Tom, who is growing rich very fast. I cannot help certain thoughts coming into my mind, any more than I can help being glad that Daisy is going out of the country. Guy never mentions her now, and is getting to look and act quite like himself. If only he *could* forget her, we might be very happy again, as Heaven grant we may.



## CHAPTER VII.

FIVE YEARS LATER.

“**M**ARRIED, this morning, at St. Paul’s church, by the Rev. Dr. —, assisted by the Rector, Guy Thornton, Esq., of Cuylerville, to Miss Julia Hamilton, of this city.”

Such was the notice which appeared in a daily Boston paper one lovely morning in September five years after the last entry in Miss Thornton’s journal. Guy had reached the point at last, when he could put Daisy from his heart and take another in her place. He had never seen her, or heard directly from her since the night she brought him the marriage settlement and tore it in pieces, thinking thus to give him the money beyond a doubt. That this did not change the matter one whit he knew, for she could not give him the ten thousand settled upon her until she was of age. She *was* of age now, and had been for a year or more, and to say the truth he had expected to hear from her when she was twenty-one. To himself he had reasoned on this wise: “Her father told her that the tearing up that paper made no difference, that she was powerless of herself to act until she was of age, so she will wait quietly till then before making another effort.” And Guy thought how he would not take a penny from her, but would insist upon her keeping it.

Still he should respect her all the more for her sense of justice and generosity, he thought, and when her twenty-first birthday came and passed, and week after week went by, and brought no sign from Daisy, there was a pang in his heart and a look of disappointment on his face which did not pass away until October hung her gorgeous colors upon the hills of Cuylerville, and Julia Hamilton came to the Brown Cottage to spend a few weeks with his sister.

From an independent, self-reliant, energetic girl of twenty-two, Julia had ripened into a noble and dignified woman of twenty-seven, with a repose of manner which seemed to rest and quiet one, and which told insensibly on Guy, until at last he found himself dreading to have her go, and wishing to keep her with him always. The visit was lengthened into a month; and when in November he went with her to Boston, he had asked her to take Daisy's place, and be his second wife. Very freely they talked of the little golden-haired girl, and Julia told him what she had heard through a mutual acquaintance who had been on the same vessel with the McDonalds when they returned from South America. Cousin Tom was with them, a rich man then, and a richer now, for his gold mine and his railroad had made him almost a millionaire, and it was currently reported and believed that Mr. McDonald meant him to marry his daughter. They were abroad now, the McDonalds and Tom, and Daisy, it was said, was even more beautiful than in her early girlhood, and that to her natural loveliness was added great cultivation and refinement of manner. She had had the best of teachers while in South America, and was now con-

tinuing her studies abroad with a view to further improvement. All this Julia Hamilton told Guy, and then bade him think again before deciding to join his life with hers.

And Guy did think again, and his thoughts went across the sea after the beautiful Daisy, and he tried to picture to himself what she must be now that education and culture had set their seal upon her. But always in the picture there was a dark background, where cousin Tom stood sentinel with his bags of gold, and so, with a half unconscious sigh for what "might have been," Guy dug still deeper the grave where, years before, he had buried his love for Daisy, and to make the burial sure this time, so that there should be no future resurrection, he put over the grave a head-stone, on which was written a new hope and a new love, both of which centered in Julia Hamilton. And so they were engaged, and after that there was no wavering on his part,—no looking back to a past, which seemed like a happy dream, from which there had been a horrible awaking.

He loved Julia at first quietly and sensibly, and loved her more and more as the winter and spring went by, and brought the day when he stood again at the altar, and for the second time took upon him the marriage vow. It was a very quiet wedding, with only a few friends present, and Miss Frances was the bridesmaid, in a gown of silver gray; but Julia's face was bright with a certainty of happiness long desired; and if in Guy's heart there lingered the odor of other bridal flowers, withered now and dead, and the memory of other marriage bells than those which sent their music on the air that September morning and if

a pair of sunny blue eyes seemed looking into his, he made no sign, and his face wore an expression of perfect content as he took his second bride for better or worse, just as he once had taken little Daisy. In Daisy's case it had proved all for the worse, but now there was a suitability in the union which boded future happiness, and many a hearty wish for good was sent after the newly-married pair, whose destination was New York.

It was nearly dark when they reached the hotel, and quite dark before dinner was over. Then Julia suddenly remembered that an old friend of hers was boarding in the house, and suggested going to her room.

"I'd send my card," she said blushing, "only she would not know me by the new name, so if you do not mind my leaving you a moment, I'll go and find her myself."

Guy did not mind, and Julia went out and left him alone. Scarcely had she gone when he called to mind a letter which had been forwarded to him from Cuylerville, and which he had found awaiting him on his return from the church that morning. Not thinking it of much consequence, he had thrust it in his pocket and in the excitement forgotten it till now. He had dressed for dinner and worn his wedding-coat, and he took the letter out and looked at it a moment, and wondered whom it was from, as people often wait and wonder, when breaking the seal would settle the matter so soon. It was post-marked in New York, and felt heavy in his hand, and he opened it at last, and found that the outer envelope inclosed another one, on which his name and address were written in a hand-writing once so familiar to him, and the sight of



which made him start and breathe heavily for a moment as if the air had suddenly grown thick and burdensome.

It was Daisy's handwriting, which he had never thought to see again; for after his engagement with Julia he had burned every vestige of a correspondence it was sorrow now to remember. One by one, and with a steady hand, he had dropped Daisy's letters into the fire and watched them turning into ashes, and thought how like his love for her they were when nothing remained of them but the thin gray tissue his breath could blow away. The four scraps of the marriage settlement which Daisy had brought him on that night of storm he kept, because they seemed to embody something good and noble in the girl; but the letters she had written him were gone past recall, and he had thought himself cut loose from her forever,—when, lo! there had come to him an awakening to the bitterness of the past in a letter from the once-loved wife, whose delicate handwriting made him grow faint and sick for a moment, as he held the letter in his hand and read:

“GUY THORNTON, ESQ.,

“Brown Cottage,

“Politeness of Mr. Wilkes.

“Cuylerville, Mass.”

Why had she written, and what had she to say to him? he wondered, and for a moment he felt tempted to tear the letter up and never know what it contained.

Better, perhaps, had he done so,—better for him, and better for the fond new wife whose happiness was so perfect, and whose trust in his love was so strong.

But he did not tear it up. He opened it, and another chapter will tell us what he read.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## DAISY'S LETTER.

IT was dated at Rouen, France, and it ran as follows :

"DEAR, DEAR GUY :—I am all alone here in Rouen, with no one near me who speaks English, or knows a thing of Daisy Thornton, as she was, or as she is now, for I am Daisy Thornton here. I have taken the old name again and am an English governess in a wealthy French family ; and this is how it came about : I have left Berlin and the party there, and am earning my own living, for three reasons, two of which concern cousin Tom, and one of which has to do with you and that miserable settlement which has troubled me so much. I thought when I brought it back and tore it up that was the last of it, and felt so happy and relieved. Father missed it, of course, and I told him the truth and that I could never touch a penny of your money if I was not your wife. He did not say a word, and I supposed it was all right and never dreamed that I was actually clothed and fed on the interest of that ten thousand dollars. Father would not tell me, and you did not write. Why didn't you, Guy ? I expected a letter so long and went to the office so many times and cried a little to myself, and said Guy has forgotten me.

"After the divorce, which I know now was a most unjust and mean affair, the people in Indianapolis treated us with so much coldness and neglect that at last we went to South America,---father, mother and I,—went to live with Tom. He wanted me for his wife before you did, but I could not marry Tom. He is very rich now, and we lived with him, and then we all came to Europe and have travelled everywhere, and I have had teachers in everything, and people say I am a fine scholar, and praise me much ; and, Guy, I have tried to improve just to please *you* ; believe me, Guy, just to please *you*. Tom was as a brother,—a dear, good big bear of a brother, whom I loved as such, but nothing more. Even were you dead, I could not marry Tom after knowing you ; and I told him so when in Berlin he asked me for the sixth time to be his wife. I had to tell him something hard to make him understand, and when I saw how what I said hurt him cruelly and made him cry because he was such a great big, awkward, dear old fellow, I put my arms around his neck and cried with him, and tried to explain, and that made him

ten times worse. Oh, if people only would not love me so much it would save me a great deal of sorrow.

"You see, I tell you this because I want you to know exactly what I have been doing these five years, and that I have never thought of marrying Tom or anybody. I did not think I could. I felt that if I belonged to anybody it was you, and I cannot have Tom, and father was very angry and taunted me with living on Tom's money, which I did not know before, and then he accidentally let out about the marriage settlement, and that hurt me worse than the other.

"Oh, Guy, how can I give it up? Surely there must be a way now I am of age. I was so humiliated about it, and after all that passed between father and Tom and me, I could not stay in Berlin, and never be sure whose money was paying for my bread, and when I heard that Madame Lafarcade, a French lady, who had spent the winter in Berlin, was wanting an English governess for her children, I went to her, and as the result, am here at her beautiful country-seat, just out of the city, earning my own living and feeling so proud to do it; only, Guy, there is an ache in my heart, a heavy, throbbing pain which will not leave me day or night, and this is how it came there.

"Mother wrote that you were about to marry Miss Hamilton. Letters from home brought her the news, which she thinks is true. Oh, Guy, it is not, it cannot be true. You must not go quite away from me now, just as I am coming back to you. For, Guy, I am—or rather, I have come, and a great love, such as I never felt before, fills me full almost to bursting. I always liked you, Guy; but when we were married I did not know what it was to love,—to feel my pulses quicken as they do now just at thought of you. If I had, how happy I could have made you, but I was a silly little girl, and married life was distasteful to me, and I was willing to be free, though always, way down in my heart, was something which protested against it, and if you knew just how I was influenced and led on insensibly to assent, you would not blame me so much. The word *divorce* had an ugly sound to me, and I did not like it, and I have always felt as if bound to you just the same. It would not be right for me to marry Tom, even if I wanted to, which I do not. I am yours, Guy,—only yours and all these years I have studied and improved for your sake, without any fixed idea, perhaps, as to what I expected or hoped. But when Tom spoke the last time it came to me suddenly what I was keeping myself for, and, just as a great body of water, when freed from its prison walls rolls rapidly down a green meadow, so did a mighty love for you take possession of me and permeate my whole being, until every nerve quivered with joy, and when Tom was gone I went away alone and cried more for my new happiness, I am afraid, than for him, poor fellow. And yet I pitied him, too, and as I could not stay in Berlin after that I came away to earn money enough to take me back to you. For I am coming, or I was before I heard that dreadful news which I cannot believe.

"Is it true, Guy? Write and tell me it is not, and that you love me still and want me back, or, if it in part is true, and you are engaged to Julia, show her this letter and ask her to give you up, even if it is the very day before the wedding,—for you are mine, and, sometimes, when the children are troublesome, and I am so tired and sorry and homesick, I have such a longing for a sight of your dear face, and think if I could only lay my aching head in your lap once more I should never know pain or weariness again.

"Try me, Guy. I will be so good and loving, and make you so happy, and your sister too,—I was a bother to her once. I'll be a comfort now. Tell her so, please; tell her to bid me come. Say the word yourself, and almost before you know it I'll be there.

"Truly, lovingly, waitingly, your wife,

"DAISY."

"P. S.—To make sure of this letter's safety I shall send it to New York by a friend, who will mail it to you.

"Again lovingly,

DAISY THORNTON."

This was Daisy's letter, which Guy read with such a pang in his heart as he had never known before, even when he was smarting the worst from wounded love and disappointed hopes. Then he had said to himself, "I can never suffer again as I am suffering now," and now, alas, he felt how little he had ever known of that pain which tears the heart and takes the breath away.

"God help her," he moaned,—his first thought, his first prayer for Daisy, the girl who called herself his wife, when just across the hall was the bride of a few hours,—another woman who bore his name and called him her husband.

With a face as pale as ashes, and hands which shook like palsied hands, he read again that pathetic cry from her whom he now felt he had never ceased to love; ay, whom he loved still, and whom, if he could, he would have taken to his arms so gladly, and loved and cherished

as the priceless thing he had once thought her to be. The first moments of agony which followed the reading of the letter were Daisy's wholly, and in bitterness of soul the man she had cast off and thought to take again cried out, as he stretched his arms toward an invisible form: "Too late, darling; too late. But had it come two months, one month, or even one week ago, I would, —I would,—have gone to you over land and sea, but now,—another is in your place, another is my wife; Julia,—poor, innocent Julia. God help me to keep my vow; God help me in my need."

He was praying now; and Julia was the burden of his prayer. And as he prayed there came into his heart an unutterable tenderness and pity for her. He had thought he loved her an hour ago; he believed he loved her now, or if he did not, he would be to her the kindest, most thoughtful of husbands, and never let her know, by word or sign, of the terrible pain he should always carry in his heart. "Darling Daisy, poor Julia," he called the two women who were both so much to him. To the first his love, to the other his tender care, for she was worthy of it. She was noble, and good, and womanly; he said many times, and tried to stop the rapid heart-throbs and quiet himself down to meet her when she came back to him with her frank, open face and smile, in which there was no shadow of her guile. She was coming now; he heard her voice in the hall speaking to her friend, and thrusting the fatal letter in his pocket he rose to his feet, and steadying himself upon the table, stood waiting for her, as flushed and eager, she came in.

"Guy, Guy, what is it? Are you sick?" she asked, alarmed at the pallor of his face and the strange expression of his eyes.

He was glad she had thus construed his agitation, and he answered that he was faint and a little sick.

"It came on suddenly, while I was sitting here. It will pass off as suddenly," he said, trying to smile, and holding out his hand, which she took at once in hers.

"Is it your heart, Guy? Do you think it is your heart?" she continued, as she rubbed and caressed his cold, clammy hand.

A shadow of pain or remorse flitted across Guy's face as he replied:

"I think it is my heart, but I assure you there is no danger, the worst is over. I am a great deal better."

And he was better with that fair girl beside him, her face glowing with excitement, and her soft hands pressing his. Perfectly healthy herself, she must have imparted some life and vigor to him, for he felt his pulse grow steadier beneath her touch, and the blood flow more regularly through his veins. If only he could forget that crumpled letter which lay in his vest pocket, and seemed to burn into his flesh; forget that, and the young girl watching for an answer and the one word "come," he might be happy yet, for Julia was one whom any man could love and be proud to call his wife. And Guy said to himself that he did love her, though not as he once loved Daisy, or as he could love her again were he free to do so, and because of that full love withheld, he made a mental vow that his whole life should be given to Julia's



happiness, so that she might never know any care or sorrow from which he could shield her.

"And Daisy?" something whispered in his ear.

"I must and will forget her," he sternly answered, and the arm he had thrown around Julia, who was sitting with him upon the sofa, tightened its grasp until she winced and moved a little from him.

He was very talkative that evening, and asked his wife many questions about her friends and the shopping she wished to do, and the places they were to visit; and Julia, who had hitherto regarded him as a quiet, silent man, given to few words, wondered at the change, and watched the bright red spots on his cheeks, and thought how she would manage to have medical advice for that dreadful heart-disease, which had come like a nightmare to haunt her bridal days.

Next morning there came a Boston paper containing a notice of the marriage, and this Guy sent to Daisy, with only the faint tracing of a pencil to indicate the paragraph.

"Better so than to write," he thought; though he longed to add the words, "Forgive me, Daisy; your letter came too late."

And so the paper was sent, and, after a week or two, Guy went back to his home in Cuylerville, and the blue rooms which Julia had fitted up for Daisy five years before became her own by right. And Fanny Thornton welcomed her warmly to the house, and by many little acts of thoughtfulness showed how glad she was to have her there. And Julia was very happy save when she



remembered the heart-disease which she was sure Guy had, and for which he would not take advice. "There was nothing the matter with his heart, unless it were too full of love," he told her laughingly, and wondered to himself if in saying this he was guilty of a lie, inasmuch as his words misled her so completely.

After a time, however, there came a change, and thoughts of Daisy ceased to disturb him as they once had done. No one ever mentioned her to him, and since the receipt of her letter he had heard no tidings of her until six months after his marriage, when there came to him the ten thousand dollars, with all the interest which had accrued since the settlement first was made. There was no word from Daisy herself, but a letter from a lawyer in Berlin, who said all there was to say with regard to the business, but did not tell where Miss McDonald, as he called her, was.

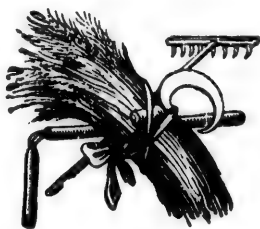
Then Guy wrote Daisy a letter of thanks, to which there came no reply, and as the time went on the old wound began to heal, the grave to close again; and when, at last, one year after his marriage, they brought him a beautiful little baby girl and laid it in his arms, and then a few moments later let him into the room where the pale mother lay, he stooped over her, and kissing her fondly, said:

"I never loved you half as well as I do now!"

It was a pretty child, with dark blue eyes, and hair in which there was a gleam of gold, and Guy, when asked by his wife what he would call her, said:

"Would you object to Margaret?"

Julia knew what he meant, and like the true, noble woman she was, offered no objection to Guy's choice, and herself first gave the pet name of Daisy to her child, on whom Guy settled the ten thousand dollars sent to him by the Daisy over the sea.



## CHAPTER IX.

DAISY, TOM, AND THAT OTHER ONE.

WATCHING, waiting, hoping, saying to herself in the morning, "It will come before night," and saying to herself at night, "It will be here to-morrow morning." Such was Daisy's life, even before she had a right to expect an answer to her letter.

Of the nature of Guy's reply she had no doubt. He had loved her once, he loved her still, and he would take her back of course. There was no truth in that rumor of another marriage. Possibly her father, whom she understood now better than she once did, had gotten the story up for the sake of inducing her through pique to marry Tom; but if so, his plan would fail. Guy would write to her, "Come!" and she should go, and more than once she counted the contents of her purse and added to it the sum due her from Madame Lafarcade, and wondered if she would dare venture on the journey with so small a sum.

"You so happy and white, too, this morning," her little pupil, Pauline, said to her one day, when they sat together in the garden, and Daisy was indulging in a fanciful picture of her meeting with Guy.

"Yes, I am happy," Daisy said, rousing from her

reverie; "but I did not know I was pale, or white, as you term it, though, now I think of it, I do feel sick and faint. It's the heat, I suppose. Oh! there is Max, with the mail! He is coming this way! He has,—he certainly has something for me!"

Daisy's cheeks were scarlet now, and her eyes were bright as stars as she went forward to meet the man who brought the letters to the house.

"Only a paper!—is there nothing more?" she asked, in an unsteady voice, as she took the paper in her hand, and recognizing Guy's handwriting, knew almost to a to a certainty what was before her.

"Oh, you are sick, I must bring some water," Pauline exclaimed, alarmed at Daisy's white face and the peculiar tone of her voice.

"No, Pauline, stay; open the paper for me," Daisy said, feeling that it would be easier so than to read it herself, for she knew what was there, else he would never have sent her a paper and nothing more.

Delighted to be of some use, and a little gratified to open a foreign paper, Pauline tore off the wrapper, starting a little at Daisy's quick, sharp cry as she made a rent across the handwriting.

"Look, you are tearing into my name, which he wrote," Daisy said, and then remembering herself she sank back into her seat in the garden chair, while Pauline wondered what harm there was in tearing an old soiled wrapper, and why her governess should take it so carefully in her hand and roll it up as if it had been a living thing.

There were notices of new books, and a runaway match

in high life, and a suicide on Sumner street, and a golden wedding in Roxbury, and the latest fashions from Paris, into which Pauline plunged with avidity, while Daisy listened like one in a dream, asking, when the fashions were exhausted, "Is that all? Are there no deaths or marriages?"

Pauline had not thought of that,—she would see; and she hunted through the columns till she found Guy's pencil mark, and read:

"Married, this morning, in — church, by the Rev. Dr. —, assisted by the rector, Guy Thornton, Esq., of Cuylerville, to Miss Julia Hamilton, of this city."

"Yes, yes, I see,—I know it's very hot here, isn't it? I think I will go in," Daisy said, her fingers working nervously with the bit of paper she held.

But Pauline was too intent on the name Thornton to hear what Daisy said, and she asked: "Is Mr. Thornton your friend or your relative?"

It was a natural enough question, and Daisy roused herself to answer it, and said quickly: "He is the son of my husband's father."

"Oh, *oui*," Pauline rejoined, a little mystified as to the exact relationship existing between Guy Thornton and her teacher's husband, who she supposed was dead, as Daisy had only confided to madame the fact of a divorce.

"What date is the paper?" Daisy asked, and on being told she said softly to herself: "I see; it was too late."

There was no doubt in her mind as to what the result would have been had her letter been in time; no doubt of Guy's preference for herself no regret that she had

written to him, except that the knowledge that she loved him at last would make him wretched with thinking "what might have been," and with the bitter pain which cut her heart like a knife there was mingled a pity for Guy, who would perhaps suffer more than she did, if that were possible. She never once thought of retribution, or of murmuring against her fate, but accepted it meekly, albeit she staggered under the load and grew faint as she thought of the lonely life before her, and she so young.

Slowly she went back to her room, while Pauline walked up and down the garden, trying to make out the relationship between the newly-married Thornton and her teacher.

"The son of her husband's father?" she repeated, until at last a meaning dawned upon her, and she said: "Then he must be her brother-in-law; but why didn't she say so? Maybe, though, that is the English way of putting it; and having thus settled the matter Pauline joined her mother, who was asking for Mrs. Thornton.

"Gone to her room, and her brother-in-law is married. It was marked in a paper, and I read it to her, and she's sick," Pauline said, without, however, in the least connecting the sickness with the marriage.

Daisy did not come down to dinner that night, and the maid who called her the next morning reported her as ill and acting very strangely. Through the summer a malarious fever had prevailed to some extent in and about Rouen, and the physician whom Madame Lafarcade summoned to the sick girl expressed a fear that she was coming down with it, and ordered her kept as quiet as possible.

"She seems to have something weighing on her mind. Has she heard any bad news from home?" he asked, as in reply to his question where her pain was the worst, Daisy always answered:

"It reached him too late—too late, and I am so sorry."

Madame knew of no bad news, she said, and then as she saw the foreign paper lying on the table, she took it up, and, guided by the pencil marks, read the notice of Guy Thornton's marriage, and that gave her the key at once to Daisy's mental agitation. Daisy had been frank with her and told as much of her story as was necessary, and she knew that the Guy Thornton married to Julia Hamilton had once called Daisy his wife.

"Excuse me, she is, or she has something on her mind, I suspect," she said to the physician, who was still holding Daisy's hand and looking anxiously at her flushed cheeks and bright, restless eyes.

"I thought so," he rejoined, "and it aggravates all the symptoms of her fever. I shall call again to-night."

He did call, and found his patient worse, and the next day he asked of Madame Lafarcade:

"Has she friends in this country? If so, they ought to know."

A few hours later and in his lodgings at Berlin Tom read the following despatch:

"Mrs. Thornton is dangerously ill. Come at once."

It was directed to Mr. McDonald, who with his wife had been on a trip to Russia, and was expected daily. Feeling intuitively that it concerned Daisy, Tom had opened it, and without a moment's hesitation packed his



valise and leaving a note for the McDonalds when they should return, started for Rouen. Daisy did not know him, and in her delirium she said things to him and of him which hurt him cruelly. Guy was her theme, and the letter which went "too late, too late." Then she would beg of Tom to go for Guy, to bring him to her, and tell him how much she loved him and how good she would be if he would only take her back.

"Father wants me to marry Tom," she said in a whisper, and Tom's heart almost stood still as he listened; "and Tom wanted me, too, but I couldn't, you know, even if he were worth his weight in gold. I could not love him. Why he's got red hair, and such great freckles on his face, and big feet and hands with frecks on them. Do you know Tom?"

"Yes, I know him," Tom answered, sadly, forcing down a choking sob, while the "big hand with the great frecks on it," smoothed the golden hair tenderly, and pushed it back from the burning brow.

"Don't talk any more, Daisy; it tires you so," he said, as he saw her about to speak again.

But Daisy was not to be stopped, and she went on:

"Tom is good, though; so good, but awkward, and I like him ever so much, but I can't be his wife. I cannot, I cannot."

"He doesn't expect it now, nor want it," came huskily from Tom, while Daisy quickly asked:

"Doesn't he?"

"No, never any more; so put it from your mind and try to sleep," Tom said, and again the freckled hands

smoothed the tumbled pillows and wiped the sweat drops from Daisy's face, while all the time the great kind heart was breaking, and the hot tears were rolling down the sunburnt face that Daisy thought so ugly.

Tom had heard from Madame Lafarcade of Guy's marriage and, like her, understood why Daisy's fever ran so high, and her mind was in such turmoil. But for himself he knew there was no hope, and with a feeling of death in his heart he watched by her day and night, yielding his place to no one, and saying to madame, when she remonstrated with him and bade him care for his own health:

"It does not matter for me. I would rather die than not."

Daisy was better when her mother came,—saved, the doctor said, more by Tom's care and nursing than by his own skill, and then Tom gave up his post, and never went near her unless she asked for him. His "red hair and freckled face" were constantly in his mind, making him loathe the very sight of himself.

"She cannot bear my looks, and I will not force myself upon her," he thought; and so he staid away, but surrounded her with every luxury money could buy, and as soon as she was able had her removed to a pretty little cottage which he rented and fitted up for her, and where she would be more at home and quieter than at Madame Lafarcade's.

And there one morning when he called to inquire for her, he, too, was smitten down with the fever which he had taken with Daisy's breath the many nights and days

he watched by her without rest or sufficient food. There was a faint, followed by a long interval of unconsciousness, and when he came to himself he was in Daisy's own room lying on Daisy's little bed, and Daisy herself was bending anxiously over him, with a flush on her white cheeks and a soft, pitiful look in her blue eyes.

"What is it? Where am I?" he asked, and Daisy replied:

"You are here in my room; and you've got the fever, and I'm going to take care of you, and I'm so glad. Not glad you have the fever," she added, as she met his look of wonder, "but glad I can repay in part all you did for me, you dear, noble Tom! And you are not to talk," and she laid her hand on his mouth as she saw him about to speak. "I am strong enough; the doctor says so, and I'd do it if he didn't, for you are the best, the truest friend I have."

She was rubbing his hot, feverish hands, and though the touch of her cool, soft fingers was so delicious, poor Tom thought of the big frecks so obnoxious to the little lady, and drawing his hands from her grasp hid them beneath the clothes. Gladly, too, would he have covered his face and hair from her sight, but this he could not do and breathe, so he begged her to leave him, and send some one in her place. But Daisy would not listen to him.

He had nursed her day and night, she said, and she should stay with him, and she did stay through the three weeks when Tom's fever ran higher than hers had done, and when Tom in his ravings talked of things which

made her heart ache with a new and different pain from that already there.

At first there were low whisperings and incoherent mutterings, and when Daisy asked him to whom he was talking he answered :

"To that other one over in the corner. Don't you see him? He is waiting for me till the fever eats me up. There's a lot of me to eat, I'm so big and awkward, overgrown.—that's what Daisy said. You know Daisy, don't you? a dainty little creature, with such delicacy of sight and touch. She doesn't like red hair; she said so, when we thought the man in the corner was waiting for her; and she doesn't like my freckled face and hands,—big hands, she said they were, and yet how they have worked like horses for her. Oh, Daisy, Daisy, I have loved her ever since she was a child, and I drew her to school on my sled and cut her doll's head off to tease her. Take me quick, please, out of her sight, where my freckled face won't offend her."

He was talking now to that other one, the man in the corner, who like some grim sentinel stood there day and night, while Daisy kept her tireless watch and Tom talked on and on,—never to her,—but always to the other one, the man in the corner, whom he begged to take him away.

"Bring out your boat," he would say. "It's time we were off, for the tide is at its height, and the river is running so fast. I thought once it would take Daisy, but it left her and I am glad. When I am fairly over and there's nothing but my big freckled hulk left, cover

my face, and don't let her look at me, though I'll be white then, not red. Oh, Daisy, Daisy, my darling, you hurt me so cruelly."

Those were terrible days for Daisy, but she never left her post, and stood resolutely between the sick man and *that other one* in the corner, until the latter seemed to waver a little; his shadow was not so black, his presence so all-pervading, and there was hope for Tom, the doctor said. His reason came back at last, and the fever left him, weak as a little child, with no power to move even his poor wasted hands, which lay outside the counterpane and seemed to trouble him, for there was a wistful, pleading look in his gray eyes as they went from the hands to Daisy, and his lips whispered faintly: "Cover."

She understood him, and with a rain of tears spread the sheet over them, and then on her knees beside him, said to him amid her sobs:

"Forgive me, Tom, for what I said when I was crazy. You are not repulsive to me. You are the truest, best, and dearest friend I ever had, and I—I—Oh Tom, live for my sake, and let me prove how—Oh, Tom, I wish I had never been born."

Daisy did not stay with Tom that night. There was no necessity for it, and she was so worn and weary with watching that the physician declared she must have absolute rest or be sick again. So she staid away, and in a little room by herself fought the fiercest battle she had ever fought, and on her knees, with tears and bitter cries, asked for help to do right. Not for help to know what was right. She felt sure that she did know that,

only the flesh was weak, and there were chords of love still clinging to a past she scarcely dared think of now, lest her courage should fail her. Guy was lost to her forever; it was a sin even to think of him as she must think if she thought at all, and so she strove to put him from her,—to tear his image from her heart, and put another in its place,—Tom, whom she pitied so much, and whom she could make so happy.

"No matter for myself," she said at last. "No matter what I feel, or how sharp the pain in my heart, if I only keep it there and never let Tom know. I can make him happy, and I will."

There was no wavering after that decision,—no regret for the "might have been,"—but her face was white as snow, and about the pretty mouth there was a quivering of the muscles, as if the words were hard to utter, when next day she went to Tom, and sitting down beside him, asked how he was feeling. His eyes brightened a little when he saw her, but there was a look on his face which made Daisy's pulse quicken with a nameless fear, and his voice was very weak, as he replied:

"They say I am better; but, Daisy, I know the time is near for me to go. I shall never get well, and I do not wish to, though life is not a gift to be thrown away easily, and on some accounts mine has been a happy one, but the life beyond is better, and I feel sure I am going to it."

"Oh, Tom, Tom, don't talk so. You must not leave me now," Daisy cried, all her composure giving way as she fell on her knees beside him, and taking both his



hands in hers wet them with her tears. "Tom," she began, when she could speak, "I have been bad to you so often, and worried and wounded you so much; but I am sorry, so sorry,—and I've thought it all over real earnestly and seriously, and made up my mind, and I want you to get well and ask me that,—that—question again, you have asked so many times, and—and—Tom, I will say yes to it now, and try so hard to make you happy."

Her face was crimson as if with shame, and she dared not look at Tom until his silence startled her. Then she stole a glance at him, and met an expression which prompted her to go on recklessly:

"Don't look so incredulous, Tom. I am in earnest. I mean what I say, though it may be unmaidenly to say it. Try me, Tom. I will make you happy, and though at first I cannot love you as I did Guy when I sent him that letter, the love will come, born of your great goodness and kindness of heart. Try me, Tom, won't you?"

She kissed his thin white hands where the freckles showed more plainly than ever, and which Tom tried to free from her; she held them fast and looked steadily into the face, which shone for a moment with a joy so great that it was almost handsome, and when she said again: "Will you, Tom?" the pale lips parted with an effort to speak, but no sound was audible, only the chin quivered and the tears stood in Tom's eyes as he battled with the temptation. Should he accept the sacrifice? It would be worth trying to live for, if Daisy could be his wife, but ought he to join her life with his? Could she ever learn to love him? No, she could not,



and he must put her from him, even though she came asking him to take her. Thus Tom decided, and turning his face to the wall, he said with a choking sob :

"No, Daisy. It cannot be. Such happiness is not for me now. I must not think of it, for I am going to die. Thank you, darling, just the same. It was kind in you and well meant, but it cannot be. I could not make you happy. I am not like Guy : never could be like him, and you would hate me after a while, and the chain would hurt you cruelly. No, Daisy, I love you too well, —and yet, Daisy,—Daisy,—why do you tempt me so,—if it could be, I might perhaps get well, I should try so hard."

He turned suddenly toward her, and winding both his arms around her, drew her to him in a quick, passionate embrace, crying piteously over her, and saying :

"My darling, my darling, if it could have been, but it's too late now,—God is good and will take me to Himself. I thought a great deal before I was sick, and believe I am a better man, and that Jesus is my friend, and I am going to him. I'm glad you told me what you have. It will make my last days happier, and when I am gone, you will find that I did well with you."

He put her from him then, for faintness and exhaustion were stealing over him, and that was the last that ever passed between him and Daisy on the subject which all his life had occupied so much of his thoughts. The fever had left him, it is true, but he seemed to have no vital force or rallying power, and, after a few days, it was clear even to Daisy that Tom's life was drawing to a

close. "The man in the corner," who had troubled him so much, was there again, and Tom was very happy. He had thought much of death and what lay beyond during those days when Daisy's life hung in the balance, and the result of the much thinking had been a full surrender of himself to God, who did not forsake him when the dark, cold river was closing over him.

Calm and peaceful as the setting of the summer sun was the close of his life, and up to the last he retained his consciousness, with the exception of a few hours, when his mind wandered a little, and he talked to "that other one," whom no one could see, but whose presence all felt so vividly.

"It would have been pleasant, and for a minute I was tempted to take her at her word," he said; "but when I remembered my hair, and face, and hands, and how she liked nothing which was not comely, I would not run the chance of being hated for my repulsive looks. Poor little Daisy! she meant it all right, and I bless her for it, and am glad she said it, but she must not look at me when I'm dead. The frecks she dislikes so much will show plainer then. Don't let her come near, or, if she must, cover me up,—cover me up,—cover me from her sight."

Thus he talked, and Daisy who knew what he meant, wept silently by his side, and kept the sheet closely drawn over the hands he was so anxious to conceal. He knew her at the last, and bade her farewell, and told her she had been to him the dearest thing in life; and Daisy's arm was round him, supporting him upon the pillow, and

Daisy's hand wiped the death moisture from his brow, and Daisy's lips were pressed to his dying face, and her ear caught his faint whisper :

"God bless you, darling ! I am going home ! Good-by."

"The man in the corner,—that other one,"—had claimed him, and Daisy put gently from her the lifeless form which had once been Tom.

They buried him there in France, on a sunny slope, where the grass was green and the flowers blossomed in the early spring ; and, when Mr. McDonald examined his papers, he found to his surprise that, with the exception of an annuity to himself, and several legacies to different charitable institutions, Tom had left to Daisy his entire fortune, stipulating only that one-tenth of all her income should be yearly given back to God, who had a right to it.



## CHAPTER X.

MISS McDONALD.

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SHE took the name again, and with it, also, Margaret, feeling that Daisy was far too girlish an appellation for one who clad herself in the deepest mourning, and felt, when she stood at poor Tom's grave, more wretched and desolate than many a wife has felt when her husband was buried from sight.

Tom had meant to make her parents independent of her so that she need not have them with her unless she chose to do so, for knowing Mr. McDonald as he did, he thought she would be happier without him; but God so ordered it that within three months after poor Tom's death, they made another grave beside his, and Daisy and her mother were alone.

It was spring time, and the two desolate women bade adieu to their dead, and made their way to England, and from there to Scotland, where among the heather hills they passed the summer in the utmost seclusion.

Here Daisy had ample time for thought, which dwelt mostly upon the past and the happiness she cast away when she consented to the sundering of the tie which had bound her to Guy Thornton.

"Oh, how could I have been so foolish and so weak,"

she said, as with intense contempt for herself, she read over the journal she had kept at Elmwood during the first weeks of her married life.

Guy had said it would be pleasant for her to refer to its pages in after years, little dreaming with what sore anguish of heart poor Daisy would one day weep over the senseless things recorded there.

"Can it be I was ever that silly little fool?" she said bitterly, as she finished her journal, "And how could Guy love me as he did? Oh, if I but had the chance again, I would make him so happy. Oh, Guy, Guy,—my husband still,—mine more than Julia's, if you could know how much I love you now; nor can I feel it wrong to do so, even though I never hope to see your face again. Guy, Guy, the world is so desolate, and I am young, only twenty-three, and life is so long and dreary with nothing to live for or to do. I wish almost that I were dead like Tom, only I dare not think I should go to the Heaven where he has gone."

In her sorrow and loneliness, Daisy was fast sinking into an unhealthy morbid state of mind from which nothing seemed to rouse her.

"Nothing to live for,—nothing to do," was her lament, until one golden September day, when there came a turning point in her life, and she found there was something to do.

There was no regular service that Sunday in the church where she usually attended, and as the day was fine and she was far too restless to remain at home, she proposed to her mother that they walk to a little chapel

about a mile away, where a young Presbyterian clergyman was to preach.

She had heard much of his eloquence, and as his name was McDonald, he might possibly be some distant relative, inasmuch as her father was of Scotch descent, and she felt a double interest in him, and with her mother was among the first who entered the little humble building, and took a seat upon one of the hard, uncomfortable benches near the pulpit.

The speaker was young,—about Tom's age,—and with a look on his florid face and a sound in his voice so like that of the dead man that Daisy half started to her feet when he first took his stand in front of her, and announced the opening hymn. His text was, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" and so well did he handle it, and so forcible were his gestures and eloquent his style of delivery, that Daisy listened to him spell-bound, her eyes fixed intently upon his glowing face, and her ears drinking in every word he uttered.

After dwelling a time upon the loiterers in God's vineyard, the idlers from choice, who worked not for lack of an inclination to do so, he spoke next of the class whose whole life was a weariness for want of something to do, and to these he said, "Have you never read how, when the disciples rebuked the grateful woman for wasting upon her Master's head what might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor, Jesus said unto them, 'The poor ye have with you always,' and is it not so, my hearers? Are there no poor at your door to be fed, no hungry little ones to be cared for out of the

abundance which God has only loaned for this purpose ? Are there no wretched homes which you can make happier, no aching hearts which a kind word would cheer ? Remember there is a blessing pronounced for even the cup of cold water, and how much greater shall be the reward of those who, forgetting themselves, seek the good of others and turn not away from the needy and the desolate. See to it, then, you to whom God has given much. See to it that you sit not down in idle ease, wasting upon yourself alone the goods designed for others ; for to whom much is given of him much shall be required."

Attracted, perhaps, by the deep black of Daisy's attire, or the something about her which marked her as different from the mass of his hearers, the speaker seemed to address the last of his remarks directly to her, and had the dead Tom risen from his grave and spoken with her face to face, she could hardly have been more affected than she was. The resemblance was so striking and the voice so like her cousin's, that she felt as if she had received a message direct from him ; or, if not from him, she surely had from God, whose almoner she henceforth would be.

That day was the beginning of a new life to her. Thenceforth there must be no more repining ; no more idle, listless days, no more wishing for something to do. There was work all around her, and she found it and did it with a will,—first, from a sense of duty, and at last for the real pleasure it afforded her to carry joy and gladness to the homes where want and sorrow had been so long.



Hearing that there was sickness and destitution among the miners in Peru, where her possessions were, she went there early in November, and many a wretched heart rejoiced because of her, and many a lip blessed the beautiful lady whose coming among them was productive of so much good. Better dwellings, better wages, a church, a school-house followed in her footsteps, and then, when everything seemed in good working order, there came over her a longing for her native country, and the next autumn found her in New York, where in a short space of time everybody knew of the beautiful Miss McDonald, who was a millionaire and who owned the fine house and grounds in the upper part of the city not far from the Park.

Here society claimed her again, and Daisy, who had no morbid fancies now, yielded in part to its claims, and became, if not a belle, at least a favorite, whose praises were in every mouth. But chiefly was she known and loved by the poor and the despised whom she daily visited, and to whom her presence was like the presence of an angel.

"You do look lovely and sing so sweet; I know there's nothing nicer in Heaven," said a little piece of deformity to her one day as it lay dying in her arms. "I'se goin' to Heaven, which I shouldn't have done if you'se hadn't gin me the nice bun andt old me of Jesus. I loves Him now, and I'll tell Him how you bringed me to Him."

Such was the testimony of one dying child, and it was dearer to Daisy than all the words of flattery ever poured into her ear. As she had brought that little child to

God so she would bring others, and she made her work among the children especially, finding there her best encouragement and greatest success.

Once when Guy Thornton chanced to be in the city and driving in the Park, he saw a singular sight,—a pair of splendid bays arching their graceful necks proudly, their silver-tipped harness flashing in the sunlight, and their beautiful mistress radiant with happiness as she sat in her open carriage, not with gayly-dressed friends, but amid a group of poorly-clad, pale-faced little ones, to whom the Park was paradise, and she the presiding angel.

"Look,—that's Miss McDonald," Guy's friend said to him, "the greatest heiress in New York, and I reckon the one who does the most good. Why, she supports more old people and children and runs more ragged schools than any half-dozen men in the city, and I don't suppose there's a den in New York where she has not been, and never once, I'm told, was she insulted, for the vilest of them stand between her and harm. Once a miscreant on Avenue A knocked a boy down for accidentally stepping in a pool of water and splattering her white dress in passing. Friday nights she has a reception for these people, and you ought to see how well they behave. At first they were noisy and rough, and she had to have the police, but now they are quiet and orderly as you please. Perhaps you'd like to go to one. I know Miss McDonald, and will take you with me."

Guy said he would not be in town on Friday, as he must return to Cuylerville the next day, and with a feeling he could not quite analyze he turned to look at the

turnout which excited so much attention. But it was not so much at the handsome bays and the bevy of queer-looking children he gazed, as at the lady in their midst, clad in velvet and ermine, with a long white feather falling among the curls of her bright hair. When Daisy first entered upon her new life, she had affected a nun-like garb as most appropriate, but after a little child said to her once: "I don't like your black gown all the time. I likes sumpting' bright and pretty," she changed her dress and gave freer scope to her natural good taste and love of what was becoming. And the result showed the wisdom of the change, for the children and inmates of the dens she visited, accustomed only to the squallor and ugliness of their surroundings, hailed her more rapturously than they had done before, and were never weary of talking of the beautiful woman who was not afraid to wear her pretty clothes into their wretched houses, which gradually grew more clean and tidy for her sake.

"It wasn't for the likes of them gownds to trail through sich truck," Bridget O'Donohue said; and on the days when Daisy was expected, she scrubbed the floor, which, until Daisy's advent, had not known water for years, and rubbed and polished the one wooden chair kept sacred for the lady's use.

Other women, too, caught Biddy's spirit and scrubbed their floors and their children's faces on the day when Miss McDonald was going to call, and when she came, she was watched narrowly, lest by some chance a speck of dirt should fall on her, and her becoming dress and handsome face were commented on and remembered as some

fine show which had been seen for nothing. Especially did the children like her in her bright dress, and the velvet and ermine in which she was clad when Guy met her in the Park were worn more for their sakes, than for the gaze of those to whom such things were no novelties. To Guy she looked more beautiful than he had ever seen her before, and there was in his heart a feeling like a want of something lost, as her carriage disappeared from view and he lost sight of the fair face and form which had once been his own.

The world was going well with Guy, for though Dick Trevyllian had paid no part of the one hundred thousand dollars, and he still lived in the Brown Cottage on the hill, he was steadily working his way to competency, if not to wealth. His profession as lawyer, which he had resumed, yielded him a remunerative income, while his contributions to different magazines were much sought after, so that to all human appearance he was prosperous and happy. Prosperous in his business, and happy in his wife and little ones, for there was now a second child, a baby Guy of six weeks old, and when on his return from New York the father bent over the cradle of his boy, and kissed his baby face, that image seen in the Park seemed to fade away, and the caresses he gave to Julia had in them no faithlessness or insincerity. She was a noble woman, and had made him a good wife, and he loved her truly, though with a different, less absorbing, less ecstatic love than he had given to Daisy. But he did not tell her of Miss McDonald. Indeed, that name was never spoken now, nor was any reference ever made to her except

when the little Daisy sometimes asked where was the lady for whom she was named, and why she did not send her a doll.

"I hardly think she knows there is such a little chit as you," Guy said to her once, when sorely pressed on the subject; and then the child wondered how that could be; and wished she was big enough to write her a letter and ask her to come and see her.

Every day after that little Daisy played "make b'leve Miss Mack-Dolly" was there, said Mack-Dolly being represented by a bundle of shawls tied up to look like a figure and seated in a chair. At last there came to the cottage a friend of Julia's, a young lady from New York, who knew Miss McDonald, and who while visiting in Cuylerville, accidentally learned that she was the divorced wife, of whose existence she knew, but of whom she had never spoken to Mrs. Thornton. Hearing the little one talking one day to Miss Mack-Dolly, asking her why she never wrote, nor sent a "sing" to her *sake-name*, the young lady said:

"Why don't you send Miss McDonald a letter? You tell me what to say and I'll write it down for you, but don't let mamma know till you see if you get anything."

The little girl's fancy was caught at once with the idea, and the following letter was the result:

"BROWN COTTAGE. *'Most 'Tissmas time.*

"DEAR MISS MAC-DOLLY:—I'se an 'ittle dirl named for you, I is, Daisy Thornton, an' my papa is Mr. Guy, an, mam-ma is Julia, and 'ittle brother is Guy, too—only he's a baby, and vomits up his dinner and ties awfully sometimes; an' I knows anoder 'ittle dirl named for somebody who dives her 'sings,' a whole lot, an' why doesn't youse dive me some, when I'se your

sake-name, an' loves you ever so much, and why you never tum here to see me? I wish you would. I ask papa is you pretty, an' he tell me yes, bootiful, an' every night I pays for you and say God bress papa an' mam-ma, an' auntie, and Miss Mac-Dolly, an' 'ittle broder, an' make Daisy a good dirl, and have Miss Mac-Dolly send her sumptin' for Tissmas, for Christ's sake, An' I wants a turly headed doll that ties and suts her eyes when she does to seep, and wears a shash and a pairesol, and anodder big dolly to be her mam-ma and pank her when she's naughty, an' I wants an 'ittle fat-iran, an' a cook-stove, an' wash-board. I'se dot a tub. An' I wants some dishes an' a stenshun table, an' 'ittle bedstead, an' yuffed seets, an' pillars, an' blue silk kilt, an' ever many sings which papa cannot buy, cause he hasn't dot the money. Vill you send them, Miss Mac-Dolly, pese, an' your likeness too. I wants to see how you looks. My mam-ma is pretty, with black hair an' eyes, but she's awful old—I dess. How old is you? Papa's hair is some dray, an' his viskers, too. My eyes is bue.

"Yours, respectfully,

DAISY THORNTON."

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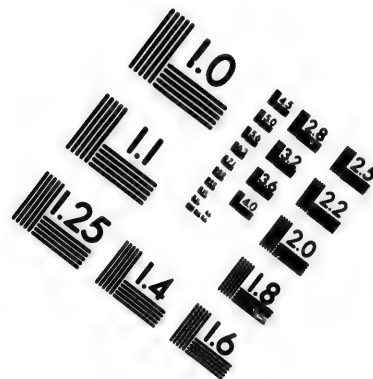
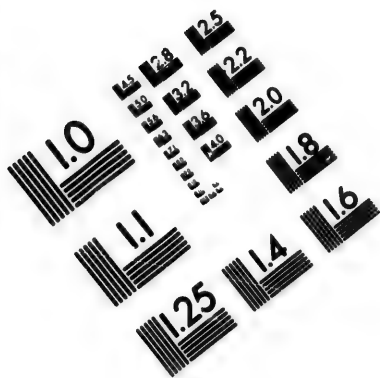
Miss Mc Donald had been shopping since ten in the morning, and her carriage had stood before dry goods stores, and toy shops, and candy stores, while bundle after bundle had been deposited on the cushions and others ordered to be sent. But she was nearly through now, and, just as it was beginning to grow dark in the streets, she bade her coachman drive home, where dinner was waiting for her in the dining-room, and her mother was waiting in the parlor. Mrs. McDonald was not very well, and had kept her room all day, but she was better that night, and came down to dine with her daughter. The December wind was cold and raw, and a few snowflakes fell on Daisy's hat and cloak as she ran up the steps and entered the warm, bright room, which seemed so pleasant when contrasted with the dreariness without.

"Oh, how nice this is, and how tired and cold I am!" she said, as she bent over the blazing fire.

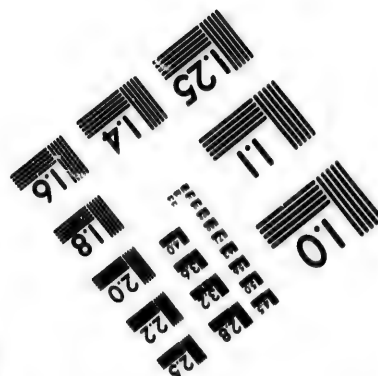
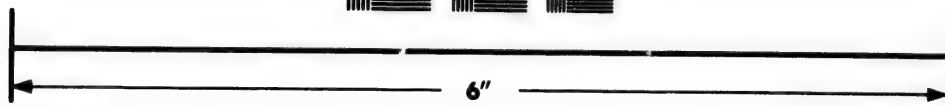
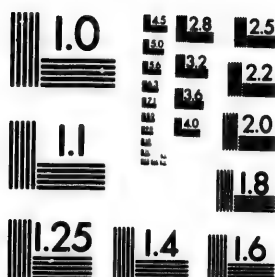
"Are you through with your shopping?" Mrs. Mc-







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Donald asked, in a half-querulous tone, as if she did not altogether approve of her daughter's acts.

"Yes, all through, except a shawl for old Sarah Mackie, and a few more toys for Biddy Warren's blind boy," Daisy said, and her mother replied: "Well, I'm sure I shall be glad for your sake when it is over. You'll make yourself sick, and you are nearly worn out now, remembering everybody in New York."

"Not quite everybody, mother," Daisy rejoined, cheerfully, "only those whom everybody forgets,—the poor, whom we have with us always. Don't you remember the text, and the little kirk where we heard it preached from? But come,—dinner is ready, and I am hungry, I assure you."

She led the way to the handsome dining-room, and took her seat at the table, looking, in her dark street dress, as her mother had said, pale and worn, as if the shopping had been very hard upon her. And yet it was not so much the fatigue of the day which affected her as the remembrance of the past she did not often dare to recall.

It was at Christmas time years ago that she first met with Guy, and all that day long, as she turned over piles of shawls, and delaines, and flannels, or ordered packages of candy, and bonbons, and dollies by the dozen, her thoughts had been with Guy and the time she met him at Leiter and Field's and he walked home with her. It seemed to her years and years ago, and the idea of having lived so long made her feel old and tired and worn. But the nice dinner and the cheer of the room revived

her, and her face looked brighter and more rested when she returned to the parlor, and began to show her mother her purchases.

Daisy did not receive many letters except on business, and, as these usually came in the morning, she did not think to ask if the postman had left her anything; and so it was not until her mother had retired and she was about going to her own room, that she saw a letter lying on the hall-stand. Miss Barker, who had instigated the letter, had never written to her more than once or twice, and then only short notes, and she did not recognize the handwriting at once. But she saw it was post-marked Cuylerville, and a sick, faint sensation crept over her as she wondered who had sent it, and if it contained news of Guy. It was long since she had heard of him,—not, in fact, since poor Tom's death; and she knew nothing of the little girl called for herself, and thus had no suspicion of the terrible shock awaiting her, when at last she broke the seal. Miss Barker had written a few explanatory lines, which were as follows:

"CUYLERVILLE, Dec., 18—.

"DEAR MISS McDONALD :—Since saying good-bye to you last June, and going off to the mountains and seaside, while you, like a good Samaritan, stayed in the hot city to look after 'your people,' I have flitted hither and thither until at last I floated out to Cuylerville to visit Mrs. Guy Thornton, who is a friend and former schoolmate of mine. Here,—not in the house, but in town,—I have heard a story which surprised me not a little, and I now better understand that sad look I have so often seen on your face without at all suspecting the cause.

"Dear friend, pardon me, won't you, for the liberty I have taken since knowing your secret? You would, I am sure, if you only knew what a dear, darling little creature Mr. Thornton's eldest child is. Did you know he had called her Daisy for you? He has, and with her blue eyes and bright

auburn hair, she might pass for your very own, with the exception of her nose, which is decidedly *retrousse*. She is three years old, and the most precocious little witch you ever saw. What think you of her making up a bundle of shawls and aprons, and christening it *Miss Mac-Dolly*, her name for you, and talking to it as if it were really the famous and beautiful woman she fancies it to be? She is your 'sake-name,' she says, and before I knew the facts of the case, I was greatly amused by her talk to the bundle of shawls which she reproached for never having sent her anything. When I asked Julia (that's Mrs. Thornton) who *Miss Mac-Dolly* was, she merely answered, 'the lady for whom Daisy was named,' and that was all I knew until the gossips enlightened me, when, without a word to any one, I resolved upon a liberty which I thought I could venture to take with you. I suggested the letter which I inclose, and which I wrote exactly as the words came from the little lady's lips. Neither Mr. Thornton, nor his wife, know aught of the letter, nor will they unless you respond, for the child will keep her own counsel, I am well assured.

"Again forgive me if I have done wrong, and believe me, as ever,

"Yours, sincerely, ELLA BARKER."

Daisy's face was pale as ashes as she read Miss Barker's letter, and then snatching up the other devoured its contents almost at a glance, while her breath came in panting gasps, and her heart seemed trying to burst through her throat. She could neither move nor cry out for a moment, but sat like one turned to stone, with a sense of suffocation oppressing her, and a horrible pain in her heart. She had thought the grave was closed, the old wound healed by time and silence, and now a little child had torn it open, and it was bleeding and throbbing again with a pang such as she had never felt before, while there crept over her such a feeling of desolation and loneliness, a want of something unpossessed, as few have ever experienced.

But for her own foolishness that sweet little child might have been hers, she thought as her heart went after the little one with an indescribable yearning which

made her stretch out her arms as if to take the baby to her bosom and hold it there forever. Guy had called it for *her*, and that touched her more than anything else. He had not forgotten her then. She had never supposed he had, but to be thus assured of it was very sweet, and as she thought of it, and read again little Daisy's letter, the tightness about her heart and the choking sensation in her throat began to give way, and one after another the great tears rolled down her cheeks, slowly at first, but gradually faster and faster until they fell in torrents, and a tempest of sobs shook her frame, as with her head bowed upon her dressing-table she gave vent to her grief. It seemed to her she never could stop crying or grow calm again, for as often as she thought of the touching words, "I pays for you," there came a fresh burst of sobs and tears, until at last nature was exhausted, and with a low moan Daisy sank upon her knees and tried to pray, the words which first sprang to her lips framing themselves into thanks that somewhere in the world there was one who prayed for her and loved her too, even though the love might have for its object merely dolls, and candies, and toys. And these the child should have in abundance, and Miss McDonald found herself longing for the morrow in which to begin again the shopping she had thought was nearly ended.

It was in vain next day that her mother remonstrated against her going out, pleading her white, haggard face and the rawness of the day. Daisy was not to be detained at home, and before ten o'clock she was down on Broadway, and the dolly with the "shash," and "pairesol,"

which she had seen the day before under its glass case was hers for twenty-five dollars, and the plainer bit of china, who was to be dollie's mother and perform the parental duty of "panking her when she was naughty," was also purchased, and the dishes, and the table, and stove, and bedstead, with ruffled sheets, and pillow-cases, and blue satin spread, and the washboard, and clothes-bars, and tiny wringer, and divers other toys, were bought with a disregard of expense which made Miss McDonald a wonder to those who waited on her. Such a Christmas-box was seldom sent to a child as that which Daisy packed in her room that night, with her mother looking on and wondering what Sunday-school was to be the recipient of all those costly presents, and suggesting that cheaper articles would have answered just as well.

Everything the child had asked for was there except the picture. That Daisy dared not send, lest it should look too much like thrusting herself upon Guy's notice and wound Julia his wife.

Daisy was strangely pitiful in her thoughts of Julia, who would in her turn have pitied her for her delusion, could she have known how sure she was that but for the tardiness of that letter Guy would have chosen his first love in preference to any other.

And it was well that each believed herself first in the affection of the man to whom Daisy wanted so much to send something as a proof of her unalterable love. They were living still in the brown cottage; they were not able to buy Elmwood back. Oh, if she only dared to do it, how gladly her Christmas gift should be the handsome



place which they had been so proud of. But that would hardly do ; Guy might not like to be so much indebted to her ; he was proud and sensitive in many points, and so she abandoned the plan for the present, thinking that by and by she would purchase and hold it as a gift to her namesake on her bridal day. That will be better, she said, as she put the last article in the box and saw it leave her door, directed to Guy Thornton's care.

\* \* \* \* \*

Great was the surprise at the Brown Cottage, when, on the very night before Christmas the box arrived and was deposited in the dining-room, where Guy and Julia, Miss Barker and Daisy, gathered eagerly around it, the latter exclaiming :

"I knows where it tum from, I do. My sake-name, Miss Mac-Dolly, send it, see did. I writ and ask her would see, an' see hab."

"What !" Guy said, as, man-like, he began deliberately to untie every knot in the string which his wife in her impatience would have cut at once. "What does the child mean ? Do you know, Julia ?"

"I do. I'll explain," Miss Barker said, and in as few words as possible she told what she had done, while Julia listened with a very grave face, and Guy was pale to his lips as he went on untying the string and opening the box.

There was a letter lying on the top which he handed Julia, who steadied her voice to read aloud :

NEW YORK, *December 22, 18—.*

"Darling little *sake-name* DAISY :—Your letter made Miss Mack-Dolly

very happy, and she is so glad to send you the doll with a *shash*, and the other toys. Write to me again and tell me if they suit you. God bless you, sweet little one, is the prayer of

MISS McDONALD."

After that the grave look left Julia's face, and Guy was not quite so pale, as he took out, one after another, the articles, which little Daisy hailed with rapturous shouts and exclamations of delight.

"Oh, isn't she dood, and don't you love her, papa?" she said, while Guy replied:

"Yes, it was certainly very kind in her, and generous. No other little girl in town will have such a box as this."

He was very white, and there was a strange look in his eyes, but his voice was perfectly natural as he spoke, and one who knew nothing of his former relations to Miss McDonald would never have suspected how his whole soul was moved by this gift to his little daughter.

"You must write and thank her," he said to Julia, who, knowing that this was proper, assented without a word, and when on the morning after Christmas Miss McDonald opened with trembling hands the envelope bearing the Cuylerville post-mark, she felt a keen pang of disappointment in finding only a few lines from Julia, who expressed her own and little Daisy's thanks for the beautiful Christmas box, and signed herself:

"Truly, MRS. GUY THORNTON."

Not Julia, but Mrs. Guy, and that hurt daisy more than anything else.

"Mrs. Guy Thornton! Why need she thrust upon me

the name I used to bear?" she whispered, and her lip quivered a little, and the tears sprang to her eyes as she remembered all that lay between the present and the time when she had been Mrs. Guy Thornton.

"She was Miss McDonald now, and Guy was another woman's husband, and with a bitter pain in her heart, she put away Julia's letter, saying, as she did so, "And that's the end of that."

The box business had not resulted just as she hoped it would. She had thought Guy would write himself, and by some word or allusion assure her of his remembrance, but instead, there had come to her a few perfectly polite and well-expressed lines from Julia, who had the *impertinence* to sign herself Mrs. Guy Thornton! It was rather hard and sorely disappointing, and for many days Miss McDonald's face was very white and sad, and both the old and young whom she visited as usual wondered what had come over the beautiful lady, to make her "so pale and sorry."



## CHAPTER XI.

AT SARATOGA.  

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THERE were no more letters from Mrs. Guy Thornton until the next Christmas, when another box went to little Daisy, and was acknowledged as before. Then another year glided and a third box went to Daisy, and then one summer afternoon in the August following, there came to Saratoga a gay party from New York, and among other names registered at one of the large hotels was that of Miss McDonald. It seemed to be her party, or at least she was its centre, and the one to whom the others deferred as to their head. Daisy was in perfect health that summer, and in unusually good spirits; and when in the evening, yielding to the entreaties of her friends, she entered the ball-room, clad in flowing robes of blue and white, with costly jewels on her neck and arms, she was acknowledged at once as the star and belle of the evening. She did not dance,—she rarely did that now, but after a short promenade through the room she took a seat near the door, and was watching the gay dancers, when she felt her arm softly touched, and turning saw her maid standing by her, with an anxious, frightened look upon her face.

“Come, please, come quick,” she said, in a whisper; and

Following her out, Miss McDonald asked what was the matter.

"*This*, you must go away at once. I'll pack your things. I promised not to tell, but I must. I can't see your pretty face all spoiled and ugly."

"What do you mean?" the lady asked, and after a little questioning she made out from the girl's statement that in strolling on the back piazza she had stumbled upon her first cousin, of whose whereabouts she had known nothing for a long time.

This girl, Marie, had, it seemed, come to Saratoga a week or ten days before, with her master's family consisting of his wife and two little children. As the hotel was crowded, they were assigned rooms for the night in a distant part of the house, with a promise of something much better on the morrow. In the morning, however, the lady, who had not been well for some days, was too sick to leave her bed, and the doctor, who was called in to see her, pronounced the disease,—here Sarah stopped and gasped for breath, and looked behind her and all ways and finally whispered a word which made even Miss McDonald start a little and wince with fear.

"He do call it the *very-o-lord*," Sarah said, "but Mary says it's the *very old one* himself. She knows, she has had it, and you can't put down a pin where it didn't have its claws. They told the landlord, who was for putting them straight out of doors, but the doctor said the lady must not be moved,—it was sure death to do it. It was better to keep quiet, and not make a panic. Nobody need to know it in the house, and their rooms are so far

from everybody that nobody would catch it. So he let them stay, and the gentleman takes care of her, and Mary keeps the children in the next room, and carries and brings the things, and keeps away from everybody. Two of the servants know it, and they've had it, and don't tell, and she said I mustn't, nor come that side of the house, but I must tell you so that you can leave to-morrow. The lady is very bad, and nobody takes care of her but Mr. Thornton. Mary takes things to the door, and leaves them outside where he can get them."

"What did you call the gentleman?" Miss McDonald asked, her voice faltering and her cheek blanching a little.

"Mr. Thornton, from Cuylerville, a place far in the country," was the girl's reply; and then, without waiting to hear more, Miss McDonald darted away, and going to the office, turned the leaves of the Register to the date of ten or eleven days ago, and read with a beating heart and quick coming breath:

"Mr. and Mrs. Guy Thornton, two children and servant. No.—and—."

Yes, it was Guy; there could be no mistake, and in an instant her resolution was taken. Calling her maid, she sent for her shawl and hat, and then, bidding her follow, walked away in the moonlight. The previous summer when at Saratoga, she had received medical treatment from Dr. Schwartz, whom she knew well, and to whose office she directed her steps. He seemed surprised to see her at that hour, but greeted her cordially, asked when she came to town and what he could do for her.

"Tell me if this is still a safeguard," she said, baring



her beautiful white arm, and showing a large round scar.  
"Will this insure me against disease?"

The doctor's face flushed, and he looked uneasily at her as he took her arm in his hand and examining the scar closely, said:

"The points are still distinct. I should say the vaccination was thorough."

"But another will be safer. Have you fresh matter?" Daisy asked, and he replied:

"Yes, some just from a young, healthy cow. I never use the adulterated stuff which has been humanized. How do I know what humors may be lurking in the blood? Why, some of the fairest, sweetest babies are full of scrofula."

He was going on further with his discussion, when Daisy, who knew his peculiarities, interrupted him.

"Never mind the lecture now. Vaccinate me quick, and let me go."

It was soon done; the doctor saying, as he put away his vial:

"You were safe without it, I think, and with it you may have no fears whatever."

He looked at her curiously again as if asking what she knew or feared, and observing the look, Daisy said to him:

"Do you attend the lady at the hotel?"

He bowed affirmatively and glanced uneasily at Sarah, who was looking on in surprise.

"Is she very sick?" was the next enquiry.

"Yes, very sick,"

"And does no one care for her but her husband?"

"No one."



"Has she suffered for care,—a woman's care, I mean?"

"Well, not exactly; and yet she might be more comfortable with a woman about her. Women are naturally better nurses than men, and Mr. Thornton is quite worn out, but it does not make much difference now; the lady—"

Daisy did not hear the last part of the sentence, and bidding him good night, she went back to the hotel as swiftly as she had left it, while the doctor stood watching the flutter of her white dress, wondering how she found it out, and if she would "tell and raise *Cain* generally."

"Of course not. I know her better than that," he said to himself. "Poor woman" (referring then to Julia). "Nothing, I fear, can help her now."

Meanwhile, Daisy had reached the hotel, and without going to her own room, bade Sarah tell her the way to No.—.

"What! Oh, Miss McDonald! You surely are not——" Sarah gasped, clutching at the dress, which her mistress took from her grasp, saying:

"Yes, I am going to see that lady. I know her, or of her, and I'm not afraid. Must we let her die alone?"

"But your face,—your beautiful face," Sarah said, and then Daisy did hesitate a moment, and glancing into a hall mirror, wondered how the face she saw there, and which she knew was beautiful, would look scarred and disfigured as she had seen faces in New York.

There was a momentary conflict, and then, with an inward prayer that Heaven would protect her, she passed on down the narrow hall and knocked softly at No.—, while Sarah stood wringing her hands in genuine distress, and feeling as if her young mistress had gone to certain ruin.

## CHAPTER XII.

## IN THE SICK ROOM.

JULIA had the small-pox in its most aggravated form. Where she took it, or when, she did not know; nor did it matter. She *had* it, and for ten days she had seen no one but her husband and physician, and had no care but such as Guy could give her. He had been unremitting in his attention. Tender and gentle as a woman, he had nursed her night and day, with no thought for himself and the risk he ran. It was a bad disease at the best, and now in its worst type it was horrible, but Julia bore up bravely, thinking always more of others than of herself, and feeling so glad that Providence had sent them to those out-of-the-way rooms, where she had at first thought she could not pass a night comfortably. Her children were in the room adjoining, and she could hear their little voices as they played together, or asked for their mamma, and why they must not see her. Alas! they would never see her again; she knew, and Guy knew it too. The doctor had told them so when he left them that night, and between husband and wife words had been spoken such as are only said when hearts which have been one are about to be severed for ever.

To Julia there was no terror in death, save as it took

her from those she loved, her husband and her little ones, and these she had given into God's keeping knowing His promises are sure. To Guy she had said :

"You have made me so happy. I want you to remember when I am gone, that I would not have one look or act of yours changed if I could, and yet, forgive me, Guy, for saying it, but I know you must often have thought of that other one whom you loved first, and it may be best."

Guy could not speak, but he smoothed her hair tenderly, and his tears dropped upon the swollen face he could not kiss, as Julia went on :

"But if you did, you never showed it in the least, and I bless you for it. Take good care of my children ; teach them to remember their mother, and if in time there comes another in my place, and other little ones than mine call you father, don't forget me quite, because I love you so much. Oh, Guy, my darling, it is hard to say good-bye, and know that after a little this world will go on the same as if I had never been. Don't think I am afraid. I am not, for Jesus is with me, and I know I am safe ; but still there's a clinging to life, which has been so pleasant to me. Tell your sister how I loved her. I know she will miss me, and be good to my children, and if you ever meet *that other one*, tell her,—tell her,—I——"

The faint voice faltered here, and when it spoke again, it said :

"Lift me up, Guy, so I can breathe better while I tell you."

He lifted her up and held her in his arms, while

through the open window the summer air and the silver moonlight streamed, and in the distance was heard the sound of music as the dance went merrily on. And just then, when she was in the minds of both, Daisy came, and her gentle knock broke the silence of the room and startled both Guy and Julia.

Who was it that sought entrance to that death-laden, disease-poisoned room? Not the doctor, sure, for he always entered unannounced, and who else dared to come there? Thus Guy questioned, hesitating to answer the knock, when to his utter surprise the door opened and a little figure, clad in airy robes of white, with its bright hair wreathed with flowers and gems, came floating in, the blue eyes shining like stars, and the full red lips parted with a smile, half pleased, half shy, which Guy remembered so well.

"Daisy, Daisy!" he cried, and his voice rang like a bell through the room, as, laying Julia's head back upon the pillow, he sprang to Daisy's side, and taking her by the shoulder, pushed her gently toward the door, saying:

"Why have you come here? Leave us at once; don't you see? don't you know?" and he pointed toward Julia, whose face showed so plainly in the gaslight.

"Yes, I know, and I came to help you to take care of her. I am not afraid," Daisy said, and freeing herself from his grasp, she walked straight up to Julia and laid her soft white hand upon her head. "I am Daisy," she said, "and I've come to take care of you. I just heard you were here. How hot your poor head is; let me bathe it; shall I?"

She went to the bowl, and wringing a cloth in ice water, bathed the sick woman's head and held the cool cloth to the face and wiped the parched lips and rubbed the feverish hands, while Guy stood, looking on bewildered and confounded, and utterly unable to say a word or utter a protest to this angel, as it seemed to him, who had come unbidden to his aid, forgetful of the risk she ran and the danger she incurred. Once, as she turned her beautiful face to him and he saw how wondrously fair and lovely it was, lovely with a different expression from any he had ever seen there, it came over him with a thrill of horror that that face must not be marred and disfigured with the terrible pestilence, and he made another effort to send her away. But Daisy would not go.

"I am not afraid," she said. "I have just been vaccinated, and there was already a good scar on my arm; look!" and she pushed back her sleeve, and showed her round, white arm with the mark upon it.

Guy did not oppose her after that, but let her do what she liked, and when, an hour later the doctor came, he found his recent visitor sitting on Julia's bed, with Julia's head lying against her bosom and Julia herself asleep. Some words which sounded very much like "thunderation" escaped his lips, and he said no more, for he saw in the sleeping woman's face a look he never mistook. It was death; and ten minutes after he entered the room Julia Thornton lay dead in Daisy's arms.

There was a moment or so of half consciousness, during which they caught the words, "so kind in you; it makes me easier; be good to the children; one is called

for you, but Guy loved me too. Good-bye. I am going to Jesus."

That was the last she ever spoke, and a moment after she was dead. In his fear lest the facts should be known to his guests, the host insisted that the body should be removed under cover of the night, and as Guy knew the railway officials would object to taking it on any train, there was no alternative except to bury it in town; and so there was brought to the room a close plain coffin, and Daisy helped lay Julia in it, and put a white flower in her hair and folded her hands upon her bosom, and then watched from the window the little procession which followed the body out to the cemetery, where, in the stillness of the coming day, they buried it, together with everything which had been used about the bed, Daisy's party dress included; and when at last the full morning broke, with stir and life in the hotel, all was empty and still in the fumigated chamber of death, and in the adjoining room, clad in a simple white wrapper, with a blue ribbon in her hair, Daisy sat with Guy's little boy on her lap and her namesake at her side, amusing them as best she could and telling them their mamma had gone to live with Jesus.

"Who'll be our mamma now? We must have one, Will oo?" little Daisy asked, as she hung about the neck of her new friend.

She knew it was Miss Mack-Dolly, her "sake-name," and in her delight at seeing her and her admiration of her great beauty, she forgot in part the dead mamma on whose grave the summer sun was shining.



The Thorntons left the hotel that day and went back to the house in Cuylerville, which had been closed for a few weeks, for Miss Frances was away with some friends in Connecticut. But she returned at once when she heard the dreadful news, and was there to receive her brother and his motherless little ones. He told her of Daisy when he could trust himself to speak at all, of Julia's sickness and death, and Miss Frances felt her heart go out as it had never gone before towards the woman about whom little Daisy talked constantly.

"Most bootiful lady," she said, "an' looked des like an 'ittle dirl, see was so short, an' her eyes were so bue an' her hair so turly."

Miss McDonald had won Daisy's heart, and knowing that made her own happier and lighter than it had been since the day when the paper came to her with the marked paragraph which crushed her so completely. There had been but a few words spoken between herself and Guy, and these in the presence of others, but at their parting he had taken her soft little hand in his and held it a moment, while he said, with a choking voice, "God bless you, Daisy. I shall not forget your kindness to my poor Julia, and if you should need,—but no, that is too horrible to think of; may God spare you that. Good-bye."

And that was all that passed between him and Daisy with regard to the haunting dread which sent her in a few days to her own house in New York, where if the thing she feared came upon her, she would at least be at home and know that she was not endangering the lives of others. But God was good to her, and though there was



a slight fever with darting pains in her back and a film before her eyes, it amounted to nothing worse, and might have been the result of fatigue and over-excitement; and when, at Christmas time, yielding to the importunities of her namesake, there was a picture of herself in the box sent to Cuylerville, the face which Guy scanned even more eagerly than his daughter, was as smooth and fair and beautiful as when he saw it at Saratoga, bending over his dying wife.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## DAISY'S JOURNAL.

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NEW YORK, *June 14, 18—.*

**T**O-MORROW I am to take my old name of Thornton again, and be Guy's wife once more. Nor does it seem strange at all that I should do so, for I have never thought of myself as not belonging to him, even when I knew he was married to another. And yet when that dreadful night at Saratoga I went to Julia's room, there was in my heart no thought of this which has come to me. I only wished to care for her and be a help to Guy. I did not think of her dying, and after she was dead, there was not a thought of the future in my mind until little Daisy put it there by asking if I would be her mamma. Then I seemed to see it all, and expected it up to the very day, six weeks ago, when Guy wrote to me, "Daisy, I want you. Will you come to me again as my wife?"

I was not surprised. I knew he would say it sometime, and I replied at once, "Yes, Guy, I will."

He has been here since, and we have talked it over, all the past when I made him so unhappy, and when I, too, was so wretched, though I did not say much about that, or tell him of the dull, heavy, gnawing pain which, sleep-

ing or waking, I carried with me so long, and only lost when I began to live for others. I did speak of the letter, and said I had loved him ever since I wrote it, and that his marrying Julia made no difference, and then I told him of poor Tom, and what I said to him, not from love, but from a sense of duty, and when I told him how Tom would not take me at my word, he held me close to him and said, "I am glad he did not, my darling, for then you would never have been mine."

I think we both wept over those two graves, one far off in sunny France, the other in Saratoga, and both felt how sad it was that they must be made in order to bring us together. Poor Julia! She was a noble woman, and Guy did love her. He told me so, and I am glad of it. I mean to try to be like her in those things wherein she excelled me.

We are going straight to Cuylerville to the house where I never was but once, and that on the night when Guy was sick and Miss Frances made me go back in the thunder and rain. She is sorry for that, for she told me so in the long, kind letter she wrote, calling me her little sister and telling me how glad she is to have me back once more. Accidentally I heard Elmwood was for sale, and without letting Guy know I bought it, and sent him the deed, and we are going to make it the most attractive place in the country.

It will be our summer home, but in the winter my place is here in New York with my people, who would starve and freeze without me. Guy has agreed to that and will be a great help to me. He need never work

any more unless he chooses to do so, for my agent says I am a millionaire, thanks to poor Tom, who gave me his gold mine and his interest in that railroad. And for Guy's sake I am glad, and for his children, the precious darlings; how much I love them already, and how kind I mean to be to them both for Julia's sake and Guy's. Hush! That's his ring, and there's his voice in the hall asking for Miss McDonald, and so for the last time I write that name, and sign myself MARGARET McDONALD.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Extracts from Miss Frances Thornton's Diary.*

ELMWOOD, June 15th,—

I have been looking over an old journal, finished and laid away long ago, and accidentally I stumbled upon a date eleven years back. It was Guy's wedding day then; it is his anniversary now, and as on that June day years ago I worked among my flowers, so have I been with them this morning, and as then people from the Towers came into our beautiful grounds, so they came to-day and praised our lovely place and said there was no spot like it in all the country round. But Julia was not with them. She will never come to us again. Julia is dead, and her grave is in Saratoga, for Guy dare not have her moved, but he has erected a costly monument to her memory, and the mound above her is like some bright flower bed all the summer long, for he hires a man to tend it, and goes twice each season to see that it is kept as he wishes to have it. Julia is dead and Daisy is here again at Elmwood, which she purchased with her own

money, and fitted up with every possible convenience and luxury.

Guy is ten years younger than he used to be, and we are all so happy with this little fairy, who has expanded into a noble woman, and whom I love as I never loved a living being before, Guy excepted, of course. I never dreamed when I turned her out in the rain that I should love her as I do, or that she was capable of being what she is. I would not have her changed in any one particular, and neither, I am sure, would Guy, while the children fairly worship her, and must sometimes be troublesome with their love and their caresses.

It is just a year since she came back to us. We were in the small house then, but Daisy's very presence seemed to brighten and beautify it, until I was almost sorry to leave it last April for this grand place with all its splendor.

There was no wedding at all; that is, there were no invited guests, but never had bride greater honor at her bridal than our Daisy had, for the church where the ceremony was performed, at a very early hour in the morning, was literally crowded with the halt, the lame, the maimed and the blind; the slum of New York; gathered from every back street and by-lane, and gutter; Daisy's "people," as she calls them, who came to see her married, and who, strangest of all, brought with them a present for the bride; a beautiful family Bible, golden clasped and bound, and costing fifty dollars. Sandy McGraw presented it, and he had written upon the fly leaf, "To the dearest friend we ever had, we give this book, as a slight token of how much we love her." Then followed, upon

a sheet of paper, the names of the donors and how much each gave. Oh, how Daisy cried when she saw the *ten cents*, and the *five cents*, and the *three cen's*, and the *one cent*, and knew that it had all been earned and saved at some personal sacrifice for her. I do believe she would have kissed every one of them if Guy had permitted it. She did kiss the children and shook every hard soiled hand there, and then Guy took her away and brought her to our home, where she has been the sweetest, merriest, happiest, little creature that ever a man called wife, or a woman sister. She does leave her things round a little, to be sure, and she is not always ready for breakfast. I guess she never will wholly overcome those habits, but I can put up better with them now than I could once. Love makes a vast difference in our estimate of others, and she could scarcely ruffle me now, even if she kept breakfast waiting every morning and left her clothes lying three garments deep upon the floor. As for Guy, —but his happiness is something I cannot describe. Nothing can disturb his peace, which is as firm as the everlasting hills. He does not caress her as much as he did once, but his thoughtful care of her is wonderful, and she is never long from his sight without his going to seek her.

May God bless them and keep them always as they are now, at peace with Him, and all in all to each other.

THE END.

JESSIE GRAHAM;

OR,

LOVE AND PRIDE.





# JESSIE GRAHAM;

OR,

## LOVE AND PRIDE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE INMATES OF THE FARM-HOUSE.

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OLD DEACON MARSHALL sat smoking beneath the maple tree which he had planted many years before, when he was scarcely older than the little girl sitting on the broad doorstep and watching the sun as it went down behind the western hills. The tree was a sapling then, and himself a mere boy. The sapling now was a mighty tree and its huge branches swept the gable roof of the time-worn building, while the boy was a gray-haired man, sitting there in the glorious sunset of that bright October day, and thinking of all which had come to him since the morning long ago, when, from the woods near by he brought the little twig, and with his mother's help secured it in its place, watching anxiously for the first indications of its future growth.

Across the fields and on a shady hillside, there were white headstones gleaming in the fading sunlight. He could count them all from where he sat,—could tell which was his mother's, which his father's, and which his fair-haired sister's. Then there came a blur before his eyes and great tears rolled down the furrowed cheek, as he remembered that in that yard there were more graves of his loved ones than there were chairs around his fire-side, even though he counted the one which for years had not been used, but stood in the dark corner of the kitchen, just where it had been left that dreadful night when his only son was taken from him. On the hillside there was no headstone for that boy, but there were two graves, which had been made just as many years as the arm-chair of oak had stood in the dark corner, and on the handsome monument which a stranger's hand had reared, was cut the name of the deacon's wife and the deacon's daughter-in-law.

Fourteen times the forest tree had cast its leaf since this last great sorrow came, and the old man had in a measure recovered from the stunning blow, for new joys, new cares, new loves had sprung into existence, and few who looked into his calm unruffled face, ever dreamed of the anguish he had suffered. Time will soften the keenest grief, and in all the town there was not apparently a happier man than the deacon; though as often as the autumn came, bringing the frosty nights and the hazy October days, there stole a look of sadness over his face, and the pipe, his never-failing friend, was brought into requisition more frequently than ever.

"It drove the blues away," he said; but on the afternoon of which we write, *the blues* must have dipped their garments in a deeper dye than usual, for though the thick smoke curled in graceful wreaths about his head, it did not dissipate the gloom which weighed upon his spirits as he sat beneath the maple, counting the distant graves, and then casting his eye down the long lane, through which a herd of cows was wending its homeward way. They were the deacon's cows, and he watched them as they came slowly on, now stopping to crop the tufts of grass growing by the wayside, now thrusting their slender horns over the low fence in quest of the juicy cornstalk; and then quickening their movements as they heard the loud, clear whistle of their driver, a lad of fourteen, and the deacon's only grandson.

Walter Marshall was a handsome boy, and none ever looked into his frank, open face, and clear, honest eyes, without turning to look again, he seemed so manly, so mature for his years, while about his slightly compressed lips there was an expression as if he were constantly seeking to force back some unpleasant memory, which had embittered his young life and fostered in his bosom a feeling of jealousy or distrust of those about him, lest they, too, were thinking of what was always uppermost in his mind.

To the deacon, Walter was dear as the apple of his eye, both for his noble qualities and the cloud of sorrow which had overshadowed his babyhood. A dying mother's tears had mingled with the baptismal waters sprinkled on his face, and the first sound to which he ever seemed to listen was that of the village bell tolling, as a funeral

train wound slowly through the lane and across the field, to the hillside, where the dead of the Marshall family were sleeping. He had lain in his grandmother's arms that day, but before a week went by, a stranger held him in her lap, while the deacon went again to the hillside and stood by an open grave. Then the remaining inmates of the farm-house fell back to their accustomed ways, and the prattle of the orphan boy,—for so they called him,—was the only sunshine which for many a weary month visited the old homestead.

Since that time the deacon's daughter had married, had wept over her dead husband, and smiled upon a little pale-faced, blue-eyed girl, to whom she gave the name of Ellen, for the sake of Walter's mother.

Aunt Debby, the deacon's maiden sister, occupied a prominent position in the family, who prized her virtues and humored her whims in a way which spoke volumes in her praise. Although unmarried, Aunt Debby declared that it was not her fault, and insisted that her husband, who was to have been, was killed in the war of 1812. Not that she ever saw him, but her fortune had been told for fifty cents by one who pretended to read the future, and as she placed implicit confidence in the words of the seer, she shed a few tears to the memory of the widower who marched bravely to his death, leaving to the world four little children, and to her a life of single blessedness. For the sake of the four children whose step-mother she ought to have been, she professed a great affection for the entire race of little ones, and especially for Walter, whose father had been her pet.

"Walter was the very image of him," she said, and when, on the night of which we are writing, she heard his clear whistle in the distance, she drew her straight-backed chair nearer to the window, and watched for the first appearance of the boy. "That's Seth again all over," she thought, as she saw him make believe set the dog on Ellen, who had gone to meet him. "That's just the way Seth used to pester Mary," and she glanced at the meek-eyed woman, moulding biscuits on the pantry shelf. As was usual with Aunt Debby, when Seth was the burden of her thoughts, she finished her remarks with, "Seth allus was a good boy," and then, as she saw Walter take a letter from his pocket and pass it to his grandfather, she hastened to the door, while her pulses quickened with the hope that it might contain some tidings of the wanderer.

The letter bore the New York postmark, and glancing at the signature, the deacon said:

"It's from Richard Graham," while both Walter and Aunt Debby drew nearer to him, waiting patiently to know the nature of its contents.

"There's nothing about my boy," the old man said, when he had finished reading, and with a gesture of impatience Walter turned away, saying to himself, "I'd thank him not to write if he can't tell us something we want to hear," while Aunt Debby went back to her knitting, and the polished needles were wet as they resumed their accustomed click.

"Mary," called the deacon, to his daughter, "this letter concerns you more than it does me. Richard's wife is dead,—killed herself with fashion and fooleries."

Advancing toward her father, Mary said :

"When did she die, and what will he do with his little girl?"

"That's it," returned the father, "that's the very thing he wrote about," and opening the letter a second time, he read that the fashionable and frivolous Mrs. Graham, worn out by a life of folly and dissipation, had died long before her time, and that the husband, warned by her example, wished to remove his daughter, a little girl eight years of age, from the city, or rather from the care of her maternal grandmother, who was sure to ruin her.

It is true the letter was not exactly worded thus, but that was what it meant. Mr. Graham had once lived in Deerwood, and knew the old Marshall homestead well,—knew how invigorating were the breezes from the mountains,—how sweet the breath of the newly mown hay, or soil freshly plowed,—knew how bracing were the winter winds which howled around the farm-house,—how healthful the influence within, and when he decided to shut up his grand house and go to Europe for an indefinite length of time, his thoughts turned toward rustic Deerwood as a safe asylum for his child. In the gentle Mary Howland she would find a mother's care, such as she had never known, and after a little hesitation, he wrote to know if at the deacon's fireside there was room for Jessie Graham.

"She is a wayward, high-spirited little thing," he wrote, "but warm-hearted, affectionate and truthful,—willing to confess her faults, though very apt to do the same thing again. If you take her, Mrs. Howland, treat



her as if she were your own ; punish her when she deserves it, and, in short, train her to be a healthy, useful woman."

The price offered in return for all this was exceedingly liberal, and would have tempted the deacon had there been no other inducement.

"That's an enormous sum to pay for one little girl," he said, when he finished reading the letter. "It will send Ellen through the seminary, and maybe, buy her a piano, if she's thinking she must have one to drum upon."

"Piano!" repeated Walter. "I'll earn one for her when she needs it. I don't like this Jessie with her city airs. Don't take her, Aunt Mary. We have suffered enough from the Grahams;" and Walter tossed his cap into the tree, with a low rejoinder, which sounded very much like "*darn 'em!*"

"Walter," said the deacon, "you do wrong to cherish such feelings toward Mr. Graham. He only did what he thought was right, and were your father here now, he'd say Richard was the best friend he ever had."

This was the place for Aunt Debby to put in her accustomed "Seth allus was a good boy," while Walter, not caring to discuss the matter, laughed good-humoredly, and said:

"But that's nothing to do with this minx of a Jessie. Why does he write her name s-i-e. Why don't he spell it s-y-sy, and be sensible? Of course she's as stuck up as she can be,—afraid of cows and snakes and everything," and Walter sneered at the idea of a girl who was afraid of snakes and everything.

"Yes," chimed in Ellen, who Aunt Debby said was born for no earthly use except to "take Walter down." "I shouldn't suppose you'd say anything, for don't you remember when you went to Boston with Mr. Smith to see the caravan, and stopped at the Tremont, and when they pounded that big thing for dinner you were scared almost to death, and hid behind the door, screaming, 'The lion's out! the lion's out! Don't you hear him roar?'"

Walter colored crimson, and replied apologetically:

"Pshaw, Nell, I was a little shaver then, only ten years old. I'd never heard a gong before, and why shouldn't I think the lion out?"

"And why shouldn't Jessie be afraid of snakes if she never saw one? She's only eight and you were ten," was the reply of Ellen, whose heart bounded at the thoughts of a companion, and who had unwittingly avowed herself the champion of the unknown Jessie Graham.

"Hush, children," interrupted the deacon. "It isn't worth while to quarrel. Folks raised in the city are sometimes green as well as country people, and this Jessie may be one of 'em. But the question now is, shall she come to Deerwood or not?" and he turned inquiringly toward his daughter. "Mary, are you willing to be a mother to Richard Graham's child?"

"Mrs. Howland started, and sweeping her hand across her face, answered: "I am willing," while Aunt Debby, in her straight-backed chair, mumbled:

"To think it should come to that,—Mary taking care of his and another woman's child; but, law! it's no more than I should have done if he hadn't been killed," and

with a sigh for the widower and his four motherless offspring, Aunt Debby also gave her assent, thinking how she would knit lamb's-wool stockings for the little girl, whose feet she guessed were about the size of Ellen's.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Ellen, when it was settled, "for now there'll be somebody to play with when my head aches too hard to go to school. I hope she'll bring a lot of dolls; and, Walter, you won't ink their faces and break their legs as you did that cob baby Aunt Debby made for me?"

When thus appealed to, Walter was reading for himself the letter which had fallen at his grandfather's feet, and his clear hazel eyes were moist with tears, as he read the postscript:

"I have as yet heard nothing from Seth, poor fellow! I hoped he would be back ere this. It may be I shall meet him in my travels."

"He isn't so bad a man after all," thought Walter, and with his feelings softened toward the father, he was more favorably disposed toward the daughter's dolls, and to Ellen's question he replied, "Of course I shan't bother her if she lets me alone and don't put on too many airs."

"I can't see to write as well as I used to," said the deacon, after everything had been arranged, "and Walter must answer the letter."

"Walter won't do any such thing," was the mental comment of the boy, whose animosity began to return toward one who he fancied had done his father a wrong.

After a little, however, he relented, and going to his room wasted several sheets of paper before he was at all

satisfied with the few brief lines which were to tell Mr. Graham that his daughter Jessie would be welcome at Deerwood. Great pains he took to spell her name according to his views of orthography, making an extra flourish to the "y" with which he finished up the "Jessy."

"Now, that's sensible," he said. "I wonder Aunt Debby don't spell her name b-i-e-by. She would, I dare say, if she lived in New York."

Walter's ideas of city people were formed entirely from the occasional glimpses he had received of his proud Boston relatives, who had been highly indignant at his mother's marriage with a country youth, the most of them resenting it so far as to absent themselves from her funeral. His lady grandmother, they told him, had been present, and had held him for a moment upon her rich black mourning dress, but from that day she had not looked upon his face. These things had tended to embitter Walter toward his mother's family, and judging all city people by them, it was hardly natural that he should be very favorably disposed toward little Jessie. Still, as as the time for her arrival drew near, none watched for her more vigilantly or evinced a greater interest in her coming than himself, and on the day when she was expected, it was observed by his cousin Ellen that he took more than usual pains with his toilet, and even exchanged his cowhide boots for a lighter pair, which would make less noise in walking ; then as he heard the whistle in the distance, he stationed himself by the gate, where he waited until the gray horses which drew the village omnibus appeared over the hill. The omnibus

itself next came in sight, and the head of a little girl was thrust from the window, a profusion of curls falling from beneath her brown straw hat, and herself evidently on the lookout for her new home.

"Curls, of course," said Walter. "See if I don't cut some of 'em off," and he involuntarily felt for his jack-knife.

By this time the carriage was so near that he vacated his post, lest the strangers should think he was waiting for them, and returning to the house, looked out of the west window, whistling indifferently, and was apparently quite oblivious of the people alighting at the gate, or of the chubby form tripping up the walk, and with sunny face and laughing round bright eyes, winning at once the hearts of the four who, unlike himself, had gone out to receive her.



## CHAPTER II.

MR. GRAHAM AND JESSIE.

SHE was a little fat, black-eyed, black-haired girl, with waist and ankles of no Lilliputian size, and when at last Walter dared to steal a look at her, she had already divested herself of her travelling habiliments, and with the household cat in her arms, was looking about for a chair which suited her. She evidently did not fancy the high, old-fashioned ones which had belonged to Deacon Marshall's wife, for, spying the one which was never used, and into which even Ellen dared not climb, she unhesitatingly wheeled it from its place, and seated herself in its capacious depths, quite as a matter of course.

A good deal shocked, and somewhat amused, Walter watched her proceedings, thinking to himself:

"By and by I'll tell her that is father's chair, and then she won't want to sit in it; but she's a stranger now, so I guess I'll let her alone."

By this time the cat, unaccustomed to quite so hard a squeeze as Jessie gave it, escaped from her lap, and jumping down, Jessie ran after it, exclaiming:

"Oh, boy, boy, stop her!"

A peculiar whistle from Walter sent the animal flying

faster from her, and shaking back her curls, Jessie's black eyes flashed up into his face, as she said :

" You're the meanest boy, and I don't like you a bit."

" Jessie," said the stern voice of her father, and for the first time since his entrance, Walter turned to look at him, and as he looked he felt the bitterness gradually giving way, for the expression of Mr. Graham's face was not proud and overbearing as he had fancied it to be.

On the contrary, it was mild and gentle as a woman's, while there was something in his pleasant blue eyes which would prompt an entire stranger to trust him at once.

He had seen much of the world, and of what is called best society, and his manners were polished and pleasing. Still there was nothing ostentatious about him, no consciousness of superiority, and when Deacon Marshall, pointing to Walter, said to him, " This is Seth's child," he took the boy's hand in his own, and for a moment, stood gazing down into the frank, open face, then pushing the brown hair from off the forehead, he said :

" You look as your father did, when we were boys together, and he was the dearest friend I knew."

" What made you turn against him then ?" trembled on Walter's lips, but the words were not uttered, for Mr. Graham's manner had disarmed him of all animosity, and he said instead :

" I hope I may be as good and true a man as I believe him to have been."

For a moment longer Mr. Graham held the hand in his, while he looked admiringly at the boy, who had paid this tribute to one whom the world considered an outcast,



then releasing it, he turned away, and Walter was sure that his eyes were moist with something which looked like tears.

"I like him for that," was his mental comment, as he watched Mr. Graham talking with his Aunt of little Jessie, who, when he bade her farewell,—for he went back that night,—clung sobbing to his neck, refusing to be comforted, until Walter whispered to her of a bright-eyed squirrel playing in its cage up in the maple tree.

Then her arms relaxed their grasp, and she went with Ellen to see the sight, while Walter accompanied Mr. Graham to the depot. There was a bond of sympathy between the man and boy, and they grew to liking each other very fast during the few moments they talked together upon the platform of the Deerwood station. Numerous were the charges Mr. Graham gave to Walter concerning his little girl, bidding him care for her as if she were his sister, and Walter felt a boyish pride in thinking how well he would fulfil his trust.

Mr. Graham could never tell what prompted him to say it, but as his mind went forward to the future, when Jessie would be grown, he said :

"She will make a beautiful woman, I think, and I hope she will be as good and pure as beautiful, so that her future husband, should she ever have one, will not look to her in vain for happiness."

It might have been that Mr. Graham was thinking of his own wife, and the little congeniality there had been between them. If so, he hastened to thrust such thoughts aside by adding, laughingly :

"Her grandmother is a remarkably scheming old lady, and has already set her heart on William Bellenger, or rather on his family; but I would rather see her buried than the wife of any of that race."

Unconsciously Mr. Graham had wounded Walter deeply, for in his veins the blood of the Bellengers was flowing, and he did not care to hear another speak thus disparagingly of a race from which his gentle mother sprung, though he had no love for it himself. William Bellenger was his cousin, and even now he felt his finger tips tingle as he recalled the only time they had met. It was on the occasion of that first visit to Boston, to which Ellen had alluded. His uncle's family were then boarding at the Tremont and William was making a constrained effort to entertain him in the public parlor, when he became so frightened with the gong, mistaking it for a roaring lion, and taking refuge behind the door as Ellen had said. With explosive shouts of laughter William repeated the story to all whose ear he could gain, and Walter had never forgotten the sneering tone of his voice as he called after him at parting:

"The lion's out! the lion's out!"

They had never seen each other since,—he hoped they never should see each other again,—and though sure that he disliked Jessie very much, he shrank even from the thought of associating her with William Bellenger, though he did not like to have Mr. Graham speak so slightly of him. Something like this must have shown itself upon his face, for Mr. Graham saw the shadow resting there and quickly divining the cause, hastened to say:

"Forgive me, Walter, for speaking thus thoughtlessly of your mother's family. I did not think of the relationship. You are not like them in the least, I am sure, for you remind me each moment of your father."

Around the curve the train appeared in view, but Walter must ask one question of his companion, and as the latter sprang upon the steps of the forward car, he held his arm, and said to him entreatingly, as it were :

"Do you think my father guilty?"

Oh, how Mr. Graham longed to say no to the impulsive boy, whose handsome face looked up to him so wistfully. But he could not, and he answered sadly :

"I did think so, years ago."

"Yes, yes; but now? Do you think so now?" and Walter held fast to the arm, even though the train was moving slowly on.

The ringing of the bell, the creaking of the machinery, and the puffing of the engine increased each moment; but above the din of them all Walter caught the reply :

"I have had no reason to change my mind," and releasing Mr. Graham, he sprang to the ground and walked slowly back to the farm-house, his bosom swelling with resentment, and his eyes filling with tears, for upon no subject was the high-spirited boy so sensitive as the subject of his father's honor.

"I'll never believe it till he himself tells me it is true," he said, and then, as he had often done before, he began to wonder if his father ever thought of the child he had never seen, and if in this world they would ever meet.

While thus meditating, he reached home, where he found

the entire family assembled around little Jessie, who, with flushed cheeks and angry eyes, was stamping her fat feet furiously, and, by way of variety, occasionally bumping her hard head against the harder door.

"What is it?" he asked, pressing forward until he caught sight of the little tempest.

The matter was soon explained. Always accustomed to her own way with her indulgent grandmother, Jessie had insisted upon opening the cage and taking the squirrel in her hands, and when her request was refused she had flown into a most violent passion, screaming for her father to come and take her away from such dirty, ugly people. It was in vain that they tried by turns to soothe her. Her spirit was the ruling one as yet, and she raved on till Walter came and learned the cause of her wrath.

"I can make her mind, I'll bet," he thought, and advancing toward her, he said sternly: "Jessie!" but a more decided stamp of the foot was her only answer, and seizing her arm, he shook her violently, while he said more sternly than before: "Stop, instantly!"

Like coals of fire the black eyes flashed up into his, meeting a look so firm and decided that they quailed beneath the glance. Jessie had met her master, and after a few hysterical sobs, she became as gentle as a lamb, nestling so close to Walter, who had seated himself upon the chintz-covered lounge, that he involuntarily wound his arm around her, as if to make amends for his recent harshness.

Jessie was as affectionate and warm-hearted as she was high-tempered and rebellious. Her tears were like April

showers, and before Walter had been with her one half hour, all traces of the storm had disappeared, and in her own way she was cultivating his acquaintance, and occasionally inflicting upon him a pang by criticising some of his modes of speech. Particularly was she shocked at his favorite expression, "Darn it !" and looking wonderingly into his face, she said :

" You mustn't use such naughty words. Nobody but vulgar folks do that."

Walter colored painfully, and that night, in the little diary which he kept, he wrote :

" Resolved to break myself of using the word 'darn ;' not because a pert city miss wishes it, but because—"

He didn't know quite what reason to assign, so he left the sentence to be finished at some future time.

In less than three weeks Jessie was the pet of the household, not even excepting Walter, whose prejudices gradually gave way, and who at last admitted that she would be " a niceish kind of a little girl, if she wasn't so awful spunky."

To no one of the family did Jessie take so kindly as to him. He had been the first to conquer her, and she clung to him with a childish, trusting love, whose influence he could not resist. Naturally full of life and fond of exercise, she was his constant companion in the fields and in the woods, where, fearless of complexion or dress, she gathered the rich butternuts, or sought among the yellow leaves for the brown chestnuts which the hoar frost had cast from their prickly covering. She liked the country, she said, and when her grandmother wrote, as she often

did, begging her to come back, if only for a week, she absolutely refused to go, bidding Walter, who was her amanuensis, say that she liked staying where she was, and never meant to live in the city again. To Walter she was of inestimable advantage, for she cured him of more than one bad habit, both of word and manner, and though he, perhaps, would not have acknowledged it, he was very careful not to offend her ladyship by a repetition of the offence, until at last his schoolmates more than once called him stuck-up and proud, while even Ellen thought him greatly changed.

And thus the autumn passed away, and the breath of winter was cold and keen upon the New England hills, while the grim old mountain frowned gloomily down upon the pond, or tiny lake, whose surface was covered over with a coat of polished glass, tempting the skaters far and near, and bringing to its banks one day Walter and Jessie Graham. It was in vain that Mrs. Howland and Aunt Debby both urged upon the latter the propriety of remaining at home and knitting on the deacon's socks just as gentle, domestic Ellen did. Jessie was not to be persuaded, and, wrapped in her warm fur cape and mittens, she went with Walter to the pond, receiving many a heavy fall upon the ice, but always saying it was no matter, particularly if Walter were within hearing. The surest way to win his favour, she knew, was to be brave and fearless, and when, as the bright afternoon drew to its close, some boy, more mischievous than the rest, caught off Walter's cap and sent it flying toward the southern boundary of the pond, she darted after it, un-

mindful of the many voices raised to stay the rash adventure.

"Stop, Jessie! stop! The deep hole lies just there!" was shouted after her. But she did not hear: she thought only of Walter's commendation when she returned him his cap, and she kept on her way, while Walter, with blanched cheek, looked anxiously after her, involuntarily shutting his eyes as the dreadful cry rose upon the air:

"She's gone! she's gone!"

When he opened them again the space where he had seen her last, with her bright face turned toward him, was vacant, and the cold, black waters were breaking angrily over the spot where she had stood. Walter thought himself dying, and almost hoped he was, for the world would be very dreary with no little Jessie in it; then as he caught sight of the crimson lining to Jessie's cape fluttering above the ice, and thought of her father's trust in him, he cried, "I'll save her, or perish too!" and rushed on to the rescue.

There was a fierce struggle in the water, and the ice was broken up for many yards around, and then, just as those who stood upon the shore, breathlessly awaiting the result, were beginning to despair, the noble boy fell fainting in their midst, his arms clasped convulsively around Jessie, whose short black curls and dripping garments clung tightly to her face and form. Half an hour later and Deacon Marshall, smoking by his kitchen fire, looked from the western window, and, starting to his feet, exclaimed:

"Who are all those people coming this way, and what



do they carry with them? It's Walter,—it's Walter!" he cried, as the setting sun shone on the white face, and hurrying out he asked, huskily, "Is my boy dead?"

"No, not dead," answered one of the group, "his heart is beating yet, but she——" and he pointed to little Jessie, whom a strong man carried in his arms.

But Jessie was not dead, although for a long time they thought she was, and Walter, who had recovered from his fainting fit, was not ashamed to cry as he looked upon the still white face and wished he had never been harsh to the little girl, or shaken her so hard on that first day of her arrival at Deerwood. Slowly, as one wakes from a heavy slumber, Jessie came back to life, and the first words she uttered were:

"Tell Walter I did get his cap, but somebody took it from me and hurt my hand so bad," and she held up the tiny thing on which was a deep cut made by the sharp-pointed ice.

"Yes, darling, I know it," Walter whispered, and when no one saw him he pressed his lips to the wounded hand.

This was a good deal for Walter to do. Never had he called any one darling before, never kissed even his blue-eyed cousin Ellen, but the first taste inspired him with a desire for more, and he wondered at himself for having refrained so long.

"Will she live?" he asked eagerly of the physician, who replied:

"There is now no reason why she should not," and Walter hastened away to his own room, where, unobserved, he could weep out his great joy.

Gradually, as the days went by, Jessie comprehended what Walter had done for her, and her first impulse was that some one should write to her father,—somebody who would say just what she told them to, and as Aunt Debby was the most likely to do this, the poor old lady was pressed into the service, groaning and sweating over the task.

"And now pa," Aunt Debby wrote, after telling of the accident, "Walter must be paid, and I'll tell you how to pay him. I heard him one night talking with his grandpa about going to school and college, and his grandpa said he couldn't, they were not worth enough in the whole world for that. Then Walter said he should never know anything, and cried so hard that I was just going to cry too, when I fell asleep and forgot it. You are rich, I know, for one of ma's rings cost five hundred dollars, and her shawl a thousand, and I want you to send me money enough for Walter to go to college. It will take a lot, I guess, for I heard him say he'd only studied the things they learned in district schools; but you have got enough. Let me give it to him with my own hands, because he saved me with his, will you, father? Walter is the nicest kind of a boy."

The letter was sent, and in course of time there came a response with a draft for two thousand dollars, the whole to be used for the noble lad who had saved the life of the father's only child. Wild with delight Jessie listened, while Aunt Debby, the only one in the secret, spelled out the words, then seizing the draft, she hastened out in quest of Walter, whom she found in the barn, milking the speckled cow. Running up to him she cried:

"It's come,—the money! You're going to school,—to college, and to be a great big man like father. Here it is," and thrusting the paper into his hand she crouched so near to him that the milk-pail was upset, and the white drops splattered her jet black hair.

At first Walter could not understand it, but Jessie managed to explain how she asked her father for money to pay for his education.

"Because," she said, "if it hadn't been for you I should have been a little dead girl now, and the boys, next winter, would have skated right over me lying there on the bottom of the pond."

Walter's first emotion was one of joy in having within his reach what he had so greatly desired, but considered impossible. Then there arose a feeling of unwillingness to receive his education from Mr. Graham, to whom they were already indebted. It seemed too much like charity, and that he could not endure. Still he did not say so to Jessie,—he would wait, he thought, until he had talked with his grandfather. Greatly surprised, Deacon Marshall listened to the story, saying, when it was finished:

"You'll accept it, of course."

"No, I shan't," returned Walter. "We owe Mr. Graham now more than we can ever pay, and I would rather work all my life on the old homestead than be dependent on his bounty. You may send it back to your father," he added, giving the draft to Jessie. "Tell him I thank him, but I can't accept his favor."

"Oh, Walter!" and climbing into a chair, for Walter was standing up, Jessie wound her arms around his neck

and poured forth a torrent of entreaties which led him finally to waver, and at last to decide upon accepting it, provided Mr. Graham would allow him to pay it back as soon as he was able.

To this Mr. Graham, who was immediately written to upon the subject, assented, for he readily understood the feeling of pride which had prompted the suggestion.

"I do not respect you less," he wrote to Walter in reply "for wishing to take care of yourself, and the time may come when the money so cheerfully loaned to you now will be sorely needed by me and mine. Until then, give yourself no trouble about it, but devote all your energies to the acquirement of an education. Were my advice asked in reference to a college, I should tell you Yale, but you must do as you think best. I shall need a partner by-and-by, perhaps, and nothing could please me more than to see the names of Graham and Marshall associated together in business again. God bless your father, wherever he may be."

This letter touched the right chord, and often in his sleep Walter saw the sign whose yellow letters read "Graham & Marshall," and the junior partner of this firm sometimes was himself, but oftener a mild-faced man wearing the sad, weary look he always saw in dreams upon his father's face. The day would come, too, he said, when the honor of the Marshall name would be redeemed, and he looked eagerly forward to the time when he was to enter as a student the Wilbraham Academy, where it was decided that he should fit himself for college.

Very delightful was the bustle and confusion attendant

upon the preparations in the deacon's household, the entire family entering into the excitement with a zest which told how much the boy was beloved. Every one wished to do something for him, even to little Jessie, who having never been taught to do a really useful thing until she came to Deerwood, worked perseveringly, but with small hope of success, upon a pair of socks like those which Ellen had knit for the deacon the winter before. But alas for Jessie! knitting was not her forte, and Walter himself could not forbear a smile at the queer-looking thing which grew but slowly in her hands. At last, in despair, she gave it up, and one night, when no one was near, threw it into the fire.

"I must give him something for a keepsake," she thought, and remembering that he had sometimes smoothed her hair as if he liked it, she seized the shears, and cutting from her head the longest, handsomest curl, gave it to him with the explanation that "her father had taken a lock of her hair when he went away, and perhaps he would like one too."

Affecting an indifference he did not feel, Walter laughingly accepted a gift which in future years would be very dear to him, because of the fair donor.

The bright April morning came at last on which Walter left his home, and with tearful eyes the family watched him out of sight, and then, with saddened hearts, went back to their usual employments, feeling that the sunshine of the house had gone with the stirring, active boy, who, in one corner of the noisy car, was winking hard and counting the fence posts as they ran swiftly past, to

keep himself from crying. Anon this feeling left him, and with the hopefulness of youth he looked eagerly into the far future, catching occasional glimpses of the day which would surely come to him when the names of Graham and Marshall would be associated together again.



## CHAPTER III.

EIGHT YEARS LATER.

IT is the pleasant summer time, and on the college green groups of people hurry to and fro, some seeking their own pleasure beneath the grateful shade of the majestic elms, others wending their way to the hotel, while others still are hastening to the Center Church to hear the valedictory, which rumor says will be all the better received for the noble, manly beauty of the speaker chosen to this honor. Flushed with excitement, he stands before the people, his clear hazel eye wandering uneasily over the sea of upturned faces, as if in quest of one from whose presence he had hoped to catch his inspiration. But he looked in vain. Two figures alone met his view,—one a bent and gray-haired old man leaning on his staff, the other a mustached, stylish-looking youth of nearly his own age, who occupied a front seat, and with his glass coolly inspected the young orator.

With a calm, dignified mien, Walter returned the gaze, wondering where he had seen that face before. Suddenly it flashed upon him, and with a feeling of gratified pride that it was thus they met again, he glanced a second time at the calm, benignant expression of the old man, who had come many miles to hear the speech his boy



was to make. In the looks of the latter there was that which kindled a thrill of enthusiasm in Walter's frame, and when at last he opened his lips, and the tide of eloquence burst forth, the audience hung upon his words with breathless interest, greeting him at the close with shouts of applause which shook the solid walls and brought the old man to his feet. Then the tumult ceased, and amid the throng the hero of the hour was seen piloting his aged grandfather across the green to the hotel.

"I wish your father was here to-day," the deacon said, as they reached the public parlor; but before Walter could reply he saw approaching them the stranger who had so leisurely inspected him with his quizzing-glass, and who now came forward, offering his hand and saying, laughingly:

"Allow me to congratulate you upon having become yourself a *lion*."

It did not need this speech to tell Walter that his visitor was William Bellenger, and he answered in the same light strain:

"Yes, I'm not afraid of the lion now;" "nor of the baboon, either," was his mental rejoinder, as he saw the wondrous amount of hair his cousin had brought back from Europe, where for the last two years he had been travelling.

William Bellenger could be very gracious when he tried, and as his object in introducing himself to Walter's notice was not so much to talk with him particularly, as to inquire after a certain young girl and heiress, whose bright, sparkling beauty was beginning to create some-

thing of a sensation, he assumed a friendliness he did not feel, and was soon conversing familiarly with Walter of the different people they both knew, mentioning incidentally Mr. Graham, the wealthy New York banker, whom he had met in Europe, for Mr. Graham had remained abroad six years. From him William had heard the warmest eulogies of Walter Marshall, and there had been kindled in his bosom a feeling of jealous enmity, which the events of the day had not in the least tended to diminish. Still if his cousin had not interfered with him in another matter of greater importance than the being praised by Mr. Graham and the people, he was satisfied, and it was to ascertain this fact that he had followed young Marshall to the hotel.

Before going to New Haven William had called at the home of Jessie's grandmother in the city, to inquire for the young lady. The house was shut up and the family were in the country, the servant said, who answered William's ring, but the sharp eyes of the young man caught the outline of a figure listening in the upper hall, and readily divining who the figure was, he answered:

"Yes, but Mrs. Bartow is here. Carry her my card and say that I will wait."

The name of Bellenger brought down at once a bundle of satin and lace, which Jessie called her grandmother, and which was supposed to be showing off its diamonds at some fashionable hotel, instead of fanning itself in the back chamber of that brown-stone front. From her William learned that Jessie was in Deerwood, and would probably attend the commencement exercises at Yale, as

a boy of some kind, whom Mr. Graham had taken up, was to be graduated at that time. To New Haven, then, he went, examining the books at every hotel, and scanning the faces of those he met with an eager gaze, and at last, as he became convinced she was not there, he determined to seek an interview with his cousin, and question him of her whereabouts. After speaking of the father as a man whose acquaintance every one was proud to claim, he said, quite indifferently :

"By the way, Walter, his daughter Jessie is in Deerwood, is she not?"

"Yes," returned Walter; "she has been there for some weeks. She lived with us all the time her father was in Europe, except when she was away at school," and Walter felt his pulses quicken, for he remembered what Mr. Graham had said of Mrs. Bartow's having set her heart on William as her future grandson.

William knew as well as Walter that Jessie had lived at Deerwood, but he seemed to be surprised, and continued:

"I wonder, then, she is not here to-day. She must feel quite a sisterly interest in you," and the eyes, not wholly unlike Walter's, save that they had in them a sinister expression, were fixed inquiringly upon young Marshall, who replied:

"I did expect her, and my cousin too; but my grandfather says that Ellen was not able to come, and Jessie would not leave her."

"She must be greatly attached to her country friends," returned William, and the slight sneer which accompanied the words prompted Walter to reply:

"She is attached to some of us, I trust. At all events, I love her as a sister, for such she has been to me, while Mr. Graham has been a second father. I owe him everything——"

"Not your education, certainly. You don't mean that?" interrupted William, who had from the first suspected as much, for he knew that Deacon Marshall was comparatively poor.

Walter hesitated, for he had not yet outlived the pride which caused him to shrink from blazoning it abroad that a stranger's money had made him what he was. Deacon Marshall, on the contrary, had no such sensitiveness, and observing Walter's embarrassment, he answered for him:

"Yes, Mr. Graham did pay for his education, and an old man's blessing on his head for that same deed of his'n."

"Mr. Graham is very liberal," returned William, with a supercilious bow, which brought the hot blood to Walter's cheek. "Do you go home immediately?" he continued, and Walter replied:

"My grandfather has a desire to visit Medway, in Massachusetts, where he married his wife, and as I promised to go with him in case he came to New Haven, I shall not return to Deerwood for a week."

Instantly the face of William Bellenger brightened, and Walter felt a strong desire to knock him down when he said:

"Allow me, then, to be the bearer of any message you may choose to send, for I am resolved upon seeing Miss Graham, and shall, accordingly, go to Deerwood. She will need a gallant in your absence, and trust me, I will

do my best, though I cannot hope to fill the place of a lion."

Involuntarily Walter clenched his fist, while in the angry look of defiance he cast upon his cousin, the impudent William read all the withering scorn he felt for him. Ay, more, for he read, too, or thought he did, that the beautiful Jessie Graham, whose father was worth a million, had a warm place in the young plebeian's heart, and this it was which brought the wrathful scowl to his own face as he compelled himself to offer his hand at parting.

"What message did you bid me carry?" he asked, and taking his extended hand, Walter looked fiercely into his eyes as he replied:

"None; I can tell her myself all I have to say."

"Very well," said William, with another bow, and stroking the little forest about his mouth, he walked away.

"I don't put much faith in presentiments," said the deacon, when he was gone, "but all the time that chap was here I felt as if a snake were crawling at my feet. Believe me, he's got to cross my path or yourn, mebbys both," and the deacon resumed his post by the window, watching the passers-by, while Walter hurriedly paced the floor with a vague, uneasy sensation, for though he knew of no way in which the unprincipled Bellenger could possibly cross his grandfather's path, he did know how he could seriously disturb himself.

Not that he had any confessed hope of winning Jessie Graham. She was far above him, he said. Yet she was the one particular star he worshipped, feeling that no

other had a right to share the brightness with him, and when he remembered the shady, winding paths in the pleasant old woods at Deerwood, and the long afternoons when Ellen would be too languid to go out, and William and Jessie free to go alone, he longed for his grandfather to give up his favorite project and go back with him to Deerwood. But when he saw how the old man was set upon the visit, wondering if he should know the place, and if the thorn-apple tree were growing still where he sat with Eunice and asked her to be his wife, he put aside all thoughts of self, and went cheerfully to Medway, while his cousin, with an eye also to the shadowy woods and the quiet mountain walks, was hurrying on to Deerwood.



## CHAPTER IV.

JESSIE AND ELLEN.

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IT was a glorious afternoon, and not a single feathery cloud flecked the clear blue of the sky. The refreshing rain of the previous night had cooled the sultry August air, and all about the farm-house the grass had taken a brighter green and the flowers a brighter hue. Away to the westward, at the distance of nearly one-fourth of a mile, the woods were streaked with an avenue of pines, which grew so closely together that the scorching rays of the noontide sun seldom found entrance to the velvety plat where Walter had built a rustic bench, with Jessie looking on, and where Jessie and Ellen now were sitting, the one upon the seat and the other on the grass filling her straw hat with cones, and talking to her companion of the young graduate, wondering where he was, and if he didn't wish he were there with them beneath the sheltering pines.

Eight years had changed the little girls of nine and eight into grown-up, graceful maidens, and though of an entirely different style, each was beautiful in her own way, Jessie as a brunette, and Ellen as a blonde. Full of frolic, life and fun, Jessie carried it all upon her sparkling face, and in her laughing eyes of black. Now, as of old,



her raven hair clustered in short, thick curls around her forehead and neck, giving her the look of a gypsy, her father said, as he fondly stroked the elfin locks, and thought how beautiful she was. Five years she had lived in Deerwood, and then, at her father's request, had gone to a fashionable boarding-school, for the only child of the millionaire must have accomplishments such as could not be obtained among the New England mountains. No process of polishing, however, or course of discipline had succeeded as yet in making her forget her country home, and when Mr. Graham, whose business called him West, offered her the choice between Newport and Deerwood, she unhesitatingly chose the latter, greatly to the vexation of her grandmother, who delighted in society now even more than she did when young. If Jessie went to Deerwood she must remain at home, for she could not go to Newport alone, and what was worse, she must live secluded in the rear of the house, for Mrs. Bartow would not for the world let her fashionable acquaintances know that she passed the entire summer in the city. She should lose *caste* at once, she thought, and she used every possible argument to persuade Jessie to give up her visit to Deerwood, and go with her instead. But Jessie would not listen. "Grandma could accompany old Mrs. Reeves," she said, "they'd have a splendid time quarreling over their respective granddaughters, herself and Charlotte, but as for her, she would go to Deerwood;" and she accordingly went there, and took with her a few city airs and numerous city fashions.

The former, however, were always laid aside when

talking to Ellen, who was by some accounted the more beautiful of the two, with her wealth of golden hair, her soft eyes of violet blue, and her pale, transparent complexion. As gentle and quiet as she was lovely, she formed a striking contrast to the merry, frolicsome Jessie, with her darker, richer style of beauty, and neither ever appeared so well as when they were together. In all the world there was no one, except her father, whom Jessie loved as she did Ellen Howland, and though, amid the gay scenes of her city home, she frequently forgot her, and neglected to send the letters which were so precious to the simple country girl, her love returned the moment the city was left behind, and she breathed the exhilarating air of the Deerwood hills.

She called Walter her brother, and had watched him through his college course with all a sister's pride, looking forward to the time when he would be in her father's employ, for it was settled that he was to enter Mr. Graham's bank as soon as he was graduated. And as on that summer afternoon she sat upon the grassy ridge and talked with Ellen of him, she spoke of the coming winter when he would be with her in the city.

"It will be so nice," she said, "to have such a splendid beau, for I mean to get him introduced right away. I shall be seventeen in a month, and I'm coming out next season. I wish you could spend the winter with me, and see something of the world. I mean to ask your mother. Father will buy your dresses to wear to parties, and concerts, and the opera. Only think of having a box all to ourselves,—you and I and Walter, and maybe Charlotte

Reeves once in a great while, or cousin Jennie. Wouldn't you love to go?"

"No, not for anything," answered Ellen, who liked early hours and quiet rooms, and always experienced a kind of suffocation in the presence of fashionable people, and who continued: "I don't believe Walter will like it either, unless he changes greatly. He used to have a horror of city folks, and I do believe almost hated *you* before you came to Deerwood, just because you were born in New York."

"Hated *me*, Ellen!" repeated Jessie. "He shook me, I know, and I've been a little afraid of him ever since, but it did me good, for I deserved it, I was such a high-tempered piece; but I did not know he hated me. Do you suppose he hates me now?" and Jessie's manner evinced a deeper interest in Walter than she herself believed existed.

Ellen saw it at once, and so did the man who for the last ten minutes had been watching the young girls through the pine tree boughs. William Bellenger had reached Deerwood on the afternoon train, and gone at once to the farm-house, whose gable roof, small window panes, and low walls had provoked a smile of derision, while he wondered what Jessie Graham could find to attract her there. Particularly was he amused with the quaint expressions of Aunt Debby, who, in her high-crowned cap, with black handkerchief smoothly crossed in front, and her wide check apron on, sat knitting by the door, stopping occasionally to take a pinch of snuff, or "shoo" the hens when they came too near.

"The gals was in the woods," she said, when he asked for Miss Graham, and she bade him "make Ellen get up if he should find her setting on the damp ground, as she presumed she was. Ellen was weakly," she said, "and wasn't like Walter, who was as trim a chap as one could wish to see. Did the young man know Walter?"

"Oh, yes," returned William. "He is my cousin."

"Your cousin!" and the needles dropped from the old lady's hands. "Bless me!" and adjusting her glasses a little more firmly upon her nose she peered curiously at him. "I want to know if you are one of them Bellen-gers? Wall, I guess you do favor Walter, if a body could see your face. It's the fashion, I s'pose, to wear all that baird."

"Yes, all the fashion," returned William, who was certainly good-natured, even if he possessed no other virtue, and having asked again the road to the woods, he set off in that direction.

Following the path that Aunt Debby pointed out, he soon came near enough to catch a view of the white dress Jessie wore, and wishing to see her first, himself unobserved, he crept cautiously to an opening among the pines, where he could see and hear all that was passing. Jessie's sparkling, animated face was turned toward him, but he scarcely heeded it in his surprise at another view which greeted his vision. A slender, willowy form was more in accordance with Will's taste than a fat chubby one, and in Ellen Howland his idea of a beautiful woman was, if possible, more than realized. She was leaning against a tree, her blue gingham morning gown,—for she

was an invalid,—wrapped gracefully about her, her golden hair, slightly tinged with red, combed back from her forehead, her long eyelashes veiling her eyes of blue, and shading her colorless cheek, while her lily-white hands were folded together, and rested upon her lap.

"Jupiter!" thought William, "I did not suppose Deerwood capable of producing anything like that. Why, she's the realization of what I've often fancied my wife should be. Now if she were only rich I'd yield the black-eyed witch of a Jessie to my milksop cousin. But, pshaw! it shan't be said of me that I fell in love at first sight with a vulgar country girl. What the deuce, they talk of Walter, do they! I'll try eavesdropping a little longer," and bending his head, he listened while their conversation proceeded.

He heard what Ellen said of Walter; he saw the startled look upon the face of Jessie as she exclaimed, "Does he hate me now?" and in that look he read what Jessie did not know herself.

"The wretch!" he muttered, between his teeth; "why couldn't he take the other one? I would, if the million were on her side," and in the glance he cast on Ellen there was more than a mere passing fancy.

She must have felt its influence, for as that look fell upon her she said:

"It's cold,—I shiver as with a chill. Let's go back to the house," and she arose to her feet just as the pine boughs parted asunder, and William appeared before them.

"Mr. Bellenger!" Jessie exclaimed. "When did you come?"

"Half an hour since," he returned, "and not finding you in the house I came this way, little thinking I should stumble upon two wood nymphs instead of one," and again the peculiar glance rested upon Ellen, who had sunk back upon her seat, and whose soft eyes fell beneath his gaze.

The brief introduction was over, and then Ellen rose to go, complaining that she was cold and tired.

"We will go too," said Jessie, putting on her hat, when Mr. Bellenger touched her arm, and said in a low voice of entreaty:

"Stay here with me."

"Yes, stay," rejoined Ellen, who caught the words. "It is pleasant here, and I can go alone."

So Jessie stayed, and when the slow footsteps had died away in the distance William sat down beside her, and after expressing his delight at meeting her again, said, indifferently as it were:

"By the way, I have just come from New Haven, where I had the pleasure of hearing the charity boy's valedictory. It is strange what assurance some people have."

"Charity boy!" repeated Jessie; "I thought Walter Marshall was to deliver the valedictory."

"And isn't he a charity scholar? Don't your father pay his bills?" asked William, in a tone which Jessie did not like.

"Well, yes," she answered, "but somehow I don't like to hear you call him that, because——" she hesitated, and William's face grew dark while waiting for her an-

swer, which, when it came, was, "because he saved my life;" and then Jessie told her companion how, but for Walter Marshall, she would not have been sitting there that summer afternoon.

"Was Walter's speech a good one?" she asked, her manner indicating that she knew it was.

Not a change in her speaking face escaped the watchful eye of William, and knowing well that insinuations are often stronger and harder to refute than any open assertion, he replied, with seeming reluctance:

"Yes, very good; though some of it sounded strangely familiar, and I heard others hinting pretty strongly at plagiarism.

This last was in a measure true, for one of Walter's class, chagrined that the honor was not conferred upon himself, had taken pains to say that the valedictory was not all of it Walter's,—that an older and wiser head had helped him in its composition. William did not believe this, but it suited his purpose to repeat it, and he watched narrowly for the effect. Jessie Graham was the soul of truth, and no accusation could have been brought against Walter which would have pained her so much as the belief that he had been dishonorable in the least degree.

"Walter would never pass off what was not his own!" she exclaimed. "It isn't like him, or like any of the Marshall family."

"You forget his father," said the man beside her, carelessly thrusting aside a cone with his polished boot.

"What did his father do?" Jessie asked in some surprise, and her companion replied:



"You astonish me, Miss Graham, by professing ignorance of what Walter's father did. You know, of course."

"Indeed I do not," she returned. "I only know that there is something unpleasant connected with him,—something which annoys Walter terribly, but I never heard the story. I asked my father once and he seemed greatly agitated, saying he would rather not talk of it. Then I asked Ellen, but if she knew she would not tell, and she evaded all my questioning, so I gave it up, for I dare not ask Deacon Marshall or Walter either. What was it Mr. Bellenger?"

William understood just how proud Jessie Graham was, and how she would be shocked at the very idea of public disgrace. Once convince her of the parent's guilt and she will sicken of the son, he thought, so when she said again, "What was it? What did Mr. Marshall do?" he replied:

"If your father has kept it from you, I ought not to speak of it perhaps; but this I will say, if Seth Marshall had his just deserts, he would now be the inmate of a felon's cell."

"Walter's father a felon!" Jessie exclaimed, bounding to her feet. "I never thought of anything as bad as that. Is it true? Oh! is it true?" and in the maiden's heart there was a new-born feeling, which, had Walter been there then, would have prompted her to shrink from him as if he, too, had been a sharer of his father's sin.

"You seem greatly excited," said William. "It must be that you are more deeply interested in young Marshall than I supposed."

"I am interested," she replied. "I have liked him so much that I never dreamed of associating him with dishonor."

"Why need you now?" asked the wily Will. "Walter had nothing to do with it, though, to be sure, it is but natural to suppose that the child is somewhat like the father, particularly if it does not inherit any of its mother's virtues, as Walter, I suppose does not. He is a Marshall through and through," and William smiled exultingly as he saw how well his insinuation was doing its work.

"Tell me more," Jessie whispered. "*What* did Mr. Marshall do?"

"I would rather not," returned William, at the same time hinting that it was something she ought not to hear. "If your father had good reason for keeping it from you, so have I. Suffice it to know that it killed his young wife, my father's sister, and that our family since have scarcely recognized Walter as belonging to us. It wasn't any fault of mine," he continued, as he saw the flash of Jessie's eyes, and readily divined that she did not wish to have Walter slighted. "I cannot help it. Our family are very proud, my grandmother particularly; and when my aunt married a poor ignorant country youth, it was natural that she should feel it, and when the disgrace came it was ten times worse. There is such a thing as marrying far beneath one's station, and you can imagine my grandmother's feelings by fancying what your own father's would be if you were to throw yourself away upon—well, upon this Walter, who may be well enough

himself, but who can never hope to wipe away the stain upon his name," and William looked at her sideways, to see the effect of what he had said.

Jessie Graham was easily influenced, and she attached far more importance to William's words than she would have done had she known his real design; so when he spoke of her marrying Walter as a preposterous and impossible event, she accepted it as such and wondered why her heart should throb so painfully or why she should feel as if something had been wrested from her,—something which, all unknown to herself had made her life so happy. She had taken her first lesson in distrust, and the poison was working well.

For a long time they sat there among the pines, not talking of Walter, but of the city and the wondrous sights which Will had seen in his foreign travels. There was something very soothing to Jessie in William's manner, so different from that which Walter assumed toward her. Like most young girls she was fond of flattery, and Walter had more than once offended her by his straightforward way of telling her faults. William, on the contrary, sang her praises only; and, while listening to him, she wondered she had never thought before how very agreeable he was. He saw the impression he was making, and when at last the sun was near the western horizon, she arose to go, proposing that they should take the Marshall grave-yard in their route, he assented, for this, he knew, would keep him longer with her alone.

"Your aunt is buried here," Jessie said, as they drew near to the fence which surrounded the home of the dead;

"that is hers," and she pointed to the monument gleaming in the sunlight.

"Do you bury your bodies above the ground?" asked William, directing her attention to the flutter of a blue morning dress, plainly visible beyond the taller stone.

"Why, that is Ellen!" cried Jessie, hurrying on until she reached the gate, where she stopped suddenly, and beckoned her companion to approach as noiselessly as possible.

Ellen also had come that way, and seating herself by her grandmother's grave, had fallen asleep, and like some rare piece of sculpture, she lay among the tall, rank grass—so near to a rose tree that one of the fading blossoms had dropped its leaves upon her face.

"Isn't she beautiful?" Jessie said to her companion, who replied; "Yes wonderfully beautiful," so loud that the fair sleeper awoke and started up.

"I was so tired," she said, "that I sat down and must have gone to sleep, for I dreamed that I was dead, and that the man who came to us in the pines dug my grave. Where is he Jessie!"

"I am here," said William coming forward, "and believe me, my dear Miss Howland, I would dig the grave of almost any one sooner than your own. Allow me to assist you," and he offered her his hand.

Ellen was really very weak, and when he saw how pale she was he made her lean upon him as they walked down the hillside to the house. And once when Jessie was tripping on before, he slightly pressed the little blue-veined hand trembling on his arm, while in a very tender

voice he asked if she felt better. Ellen Howland was wholly unaccustomed to the world, and had grown up to womanhood as ignorant of flattery and deceit as the veriest child. Pure and innocent herself, she did not dream of treachery in others. Walter to her was a fair type of of all mankind, and she could not begin to fathom the heart of the man who walked beside her, touching her hand more than once before they reached the farm-house door.

They found the supper table neatly spread for five, and though William's intention was to spend the night at the village hotel, he accepted Mrs. Howland's invitation to stay to tea, making himself so much at home, and chatting with all so familiarly, that Aunt Debby pronounced him a clever chap, while Mrs. Howland wondered why people should say the Bellengers of Boston were proud and overbearing. It was late that night when William left them, for there was something very attractive in the blue of Ellen's eyes, and the shining black of Jessie's, and when at last he left them, and was alone with himself and the moonlight, he was conscious that there had come to him that day the first unselfish, manly impulse he had known for years. He had mingled much with fashionable ladies. None knew how artificial they were better than himself, and he had come at last to believe that there was not among them a single true, noble-hearted woman. Jessie Graham might be an exception, but even she was tainted with city atmosphere. Her father's purse, however, would make amends for any faults she might possess, and he must win the purse at all hazards; but while doing that he did

think it wrong to pay the tribute of admiration to the golden-haired Ellen, whose modest, refined beauty had impressed him so much, and whose artless, childlike manner had affected him more than he supposed. "Little Snow-Drop" he called her to himself, and sitting alone in his chamber at the hotel, he blessed the happy chance which had thrown her in his way.

"It is like the refreshing shower to the parched earth," he said, and he thought what happiness it would be to study that pure girl, to see if, far down in the depths of her heart, there were not the germs of vanity and deceit, or better yet, if there were not something in her nature which would sometime respond to him. He did not think of the harm he might do her. He did not care, in fact, even though he won her love only to cast it from him as a useless thing. Country girls like her were only made for men like him to play with. No wonder then if in her dreams that night Ellen moaned with fear of the beautiful serpent which seemed winding itself fold on fold about her.

Jessie, too, had troubled dreams of felon's cells, of clanking chains, and even of a gallows, with Walter standing underneath beseeching her to come and share the shame with him. Truly the serpent had entered this Eden and left its poisonous trail.

For nearly a week William staid in town, and the village maidens often looked wistfully after him as he drove his fast horses, sometimes with Jessie at his side, and sometimes with Ellen, but never with them both for the words he breathed into the ear of one were not

intended for the other. Drop by drop was he infusing into Jessie's mind a distrust of one whom she had heretofore considered the soul of integrity and honor. Not openly, lest she should suspect his motive, but covertly, cautiously, always apparently seeking an excuse for anything the young man might hereafter do, and succeeded at last in making Jessie thoroughly uncomfortable, though why she could not tell. She did not blame Walter for his father's sins, but she would much rather his name should have been without a blemish.

Gradually the brightness of Jessie's face gave way to a thoughtful, serious look, her merry laugh was seldom heard, and she would sit for hours so absorbed in her own thoughts as not to heed the change which the few last days had wrought in Ellen, too. Never before had the latter seemed so happy, so joyous, so full of life as now, and Aunt Debby said the rides with Mr. Bellenger upon the mountains had done her good. William had pursued his study faithfully, and, in doing so, had become so much interested himself that he would have asked Ellen to be his wife had she been rich as she was lovely. But his bride must be an heiress; and so, though knowing that he could never be to Ellen Howland other than a friend, he led her on step by step until at last she saw but what he saw, and heard but what he heard. He was not deceiving her, he said, sometimes when conscience reproached him for his cruelty. She knew how widely different their stations were; she could not expect that one whom half the belles of Boston and New York would willingly accept could think of making her his wife. He



was only polite to her, only giving a little variety to her monotonous life. She would forget him when he was gone. And at this point he was conscious of an unwillingness to be forgotten.

"If we were only Mormons," he thought, the last night of his stay at Deerwood, when out under the cherry trees in the garden he talked with her alone, and saw the varying color on her cheek, as he said, "We may never meet again. If we were only Mormons, I would have them both, Nellie and Jessie, the one for her gilded setting, the other because——"

He did not finish the sentence, for he was not willing then to acknowledge to himself the love which really and truly was growing in his heart for the fair girl beside him.

"But you'll surely come to us again," Nellie said. "Jessie will be here. You'll want to visit her," and a tear trembled on her long eyelashes.

"I can see Jessie in the city, and if I come to Deerwood it will be you who brings me. Do you wish me to come and see you, Nellie?" and the dark, handsome face bent so low that the rich brown hair rested on the golden locks of the artless, innocent girl, who answered, in a whisper:

"Yes, I wish you to come."

"Then you must give me a kiss," he said, "as a surety of my welcome, and when the trees on the mountain where we have been so happy together are casting their dense leaves in the autumn, I will surely be with you again."

The kiss was given—not one—not two—but many, for William Bellenger was greedy, and his lips had never touched aught so pure and sweet before.

“I wouldn’t tell Walter that I’m coming,” he said, “for he does not like me, I fancy, I cannot bear to have him prejudice you against me. I wouldn’t tell my mother either, or any one——”

“Not Jessie?” Ellen asked, for she had a kind of natural pride in wishing her friend to know that she, who never aspired to notice of any kind, had succeeded in pleasing the fastidious William Bellenger.

“No, not Jessie,” he said, “because,—well, because you better not,” and knowing well his power over the timid girl he felt sure that his wishes would be regarded, and with another good-by he left her.

He had hoped that Jessie would be induced to accompany him to New York, and as there was a secret understanding between himself and Mrs. Bartow, the old lady had written, entreating her granddaughter to return with William.

“You have staid in the country long enough,” she wrote, “and I dare say you are as sunburnt and freckled as you can be, so pray come home. Everybody is gone, I know, and New York is just like Sunday while I stay like a guilty thing in the rear of the house, to make folks think I’m off to some watering place. I wouldn’t for the world let old Mrs. Reeves know that I have been cooped up here the blessed summer. It’s all owing to your obstinacy, too, and I think you ought to come back and entertain me. Mr. Bellenger will attend to you, and you

couldn't ask for a more desirable companion. Old Mrs. Reeves says he is the most eligible match in the city, his family are so aristocratic. There isn't a single mechanic or working person in the whole line, for she spent an entire season in tracing back their ancestry, finding but one blot, and that an unfortunate marriage of a Miss Ellen Bellenger with some ignorant country loafer she met at a boarding-school, and who she says was hung, or sent to State prison, I forgot which. I am sorry she discovered this last, as in case you cut out Charlotte, and of course you will, it will be like the spiteful old wretch to blazon it abroad, though William ain't to blame, of course."

"I wonder I never told grandma that Walter was connected with the Bellengers," Jessie thought, as she finished reading this letter, which came to her the night when William, beneath the cherry trees, was whispering words to Ellen which should never have been spoken. It's probably because I've not been much with her of late, and she never seemed at all interested in him, except indeed, to say that papa ought to get him a situation in a grocery, or something to pay him for saving my life. I wish she wasn't so foolishly proud," and as Jessie read the letter again, she felt glad that her grandmother did not know how nearly Walter Marshall was connected with the man who "was hung, or sent to State prison."

Gradually, too, there arose before her mind the whole array of her city friends, with old Mrs. Reeves and Charlotte at the head, and the idea of having Walter with her in the city the coming winter was not as plea-

sant as it once had been. Her grandmother might find out who he was; William would tell, perhaps, and she could not bear the thought of seeing him slighted, as he was sure to be if the tide, of which the old lady Reeves was the under-current, should set in against him.

"I've half a mind to go home," she thought, "before anything definite is arranged, and persuade father to secure Walter just as good a situation in some other place where he won't be slighted."

This allusion to her father was a fortunate one, for in her cool moments of reflection there was no one whose judgment Jessie regarded so highly as her father's. He knew Walter,—he respected him, too, and had often spoken with pleasure of the time when he would be with him.

"People dare not laugh if father takes him up," she thought, while something whispered to her that she, too could, if she would, do much toward helping Walter to the position in society he was fitted to occupy. "I won't go," she said, at last. "I'll stay and see Walter again, at all events, though I do wish Will hadn't told me about his speech, and his father, too. I mean to ask him some time to tell me the exact truth." And having reached this resolution Jessie sat down and wrote to her grandmother that she could not come yet, she was so happy in the country.

This she intended taking to William in the morning, for she had promised to meet him at the depot and see him off. "I shall be rather lonely when he is gone," she thought, and walking to the window of her room, she

wondered if Charlotte Reeves would succeed in winning William Bellenger.

"Her grandmother will strain every nerve," she thought, "but by just saying a word I can supplant her, I know, else why has he stayed here a whole week? Nell, is that you?" and Jessie started as the young girl glided into the room, her face unusually pale, and her whole appearance indicative of some secret agitation. "Where have you been?" asked Jessie, "and who was it that shut the gate?"

"Where? I didn't hear any gate," Ellen replied, trembling lest she should betray what she had been forbidden to divulge.

Had she confessed it then it would have saved her many a weary heartache, and her companion from many a thoughtless act, but she did not, and when Jessie caressed her white cheek, and said laughingly, "Has my prudish Nell a secret love affair?" she made some incoherent answer, and, seeking her pillow, lived over again the scene in the garden, blushing to herself as she recalled the dark face which had bent so near to hers, and the tender voice which had whispered in her ear the name so recently given to her. "Little Snow-Drop," he called her when he bade her adieu, and the moon went down behind the mountain ere she fell asleep thinking of that name and the time when the forest tree would cast its leaf and he be with her again.

## CHAPTER V.

WALTER AND JESSIE.

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“SO you won’t go with me,” William said to Jessie, next morning, when she met him at the depot and gave him the note intended for her grandmother.

“No,” she replied. “The city is dull as yet, and I’d rather remain here with Ellen.”

“Oh, yes, Ellen,” and William spoke quite indifferently. “Why didn’t she come to bid me good-by?” and he looked curiously at Jessie to see how much she knew.

But Jessie suspected nothing, and replied at once :

“She has a headache this morning and was still in bed when I left her.”

The heartless man was conscious of a pleasurable sensation,—a feeling of gratified vanity,—for he knew that headache was for him. But he merely said :

“Tell her that I’m sorry she’s sick ; she is a pleasant, quiet little girl, quite superior to country girls in general.”

“There’s the train,” cried Jessie, and in a moment the cars rolled up before them.

“It will seem a young eternity until you come home,” said William, clasping Jessie’s hand. “Good-bye,” he added, as “all aboard” was shouted in his ear, and as he turned away his place was taken by another, who had

witnessed the parting between the two, and at whom Jessie looked wonderingly, exclaiming:

"Why, Walter, I didn't expect you to-day."

"And shall I infer that I am the less welcome from that?" the young man asked, for with his inborn jealousy, which no amount of discipline could quite subdue, he thought he detected in Jessie's tone and manner something cold and constrained.

Nor was he wholly mistaken, for Jessie did not feel toward him just as she had done before. Still she greeted him cordially,—thought how handsome he was, and came pretty near telling him so,—but told him instead, that she thought he resembled his cousin William. This brought the conversation to a point Walter longed to reach, and as they walked slowly towards home he questioned her of William,—asking when he came, and if she had seen much of him previous to his visit there.

"I saw him almost every day before he went to Europe," she replied. "You know he lives in New York now, and grandma thinks there's nobody like him."

"Yes," returned Walter, "I remember your father told me once that she had set her heart upon your marrying him."

"People would think it a splendid match," returned Jessie, a little mischievously, for as she had known that William disliked Walter, so she now felt that Walter disliked William, and she continued: "Charlotte Reeves would give the world to have him spend a week in the country with her," and the saucy black eyes looked roguishly up at Walter, who frowned gloomily for an instant, and then rejoined:



"Shall I tell you what your father said about it?"

"Yes, do. I think everything of his opinion."

"He said, then, that he would rather see you buried than the wife of any of that race," and Walter laid a great stress upon the last two words.

For a time Jessie walked on in silence, then stopping short and looking up from under her straw hat, she said:

"Ain't *you* one of that race?"

"I suppose I am," answered Walter, smiling at a question which admitted of two or three significations.

Jessie thought of but one. Her father liked Walter very much, even though his mother was a Bellenger; consequently it must be something about William himself which prompted that remark, and as Jessie usually echoed her father's sentiments, she felt the old disagreeable sensation giving way, and before they reached the farmhouse she was chatting as gayly with Walter, as if nothing had ever come between them.

That night Walter and Jessie sat together in the little portico, which was securely shaded from the sun by Aunt Debby's thrifty hop vines. Walter was telling Jessie of his recent visit, and how his grandfather cried when he stood in the room where he was married nearly fifty years before.

"I supposed old people outlived all their romance," said Jessie, adding laughingly, as she plucked the broad green leaves growing near her head, "I don't think I could love anybody but father fifty years,—could you?"

"It would depend a good deal upon the person I loved,"

returned Walter, and the look he gave Jessie seemed to say that it would not be a hard matter to love her through all time.

Jessie saw the look, and while it thrilled her with a sudden emotion of pleasure, it involuntarily reminded her of what William had said of the valedictory, and abruptly changing the conversation she said :

"Mr. Bellenger told me your speech was very good. May I see it for myself?"

Walter was a fine orator, and knew that the favor with which his speech had been received was in a great measure owing to the manner in which it was delivered. He was willing for Jessie to have heard it, but he felt a natural reluctance in permitting her to read it. Jessie saw his hesitancy, and it strengthened the suspicion which before had hardly existed.

"Yes, let me see it," she said. "You are surely not afraid of me!" and she persisted in her entreaties until he gave it into her hands, and then joined his grandfather, while she returned to her room, and striking a light, abandoned herself to the reading of the valedictory ; and as she read it seemed even to her that she had heard some portion of it before.

"Yes, I have?" she exclaimed, as she came upon a strikingly expressed and peculiar idea. "I have read that in print," and in Jessie's heart there was a sore spot, for the losing confidence in Walter was terrible to her. "He is not strictly honorable," she said, and laying her face upon the roll of paper, she cried to think how she had been deceived.

The next morning Walter was not long in observing her cold, distant manner, and he accordingly became as cold and formal toward her, addressing her as Miss Graham, when he spoke to her at all, and after breakfast was over, going to the village, where he remained until long past the dinner hour, hearing that which made him in no hurry to return home and make his peace with the little dark-eyed beauty. Everybody was talking of Miss Graham's city beau, who had taken her to ride so often, and who, when joked by his familiar landlord, had partially admitted that an engagement actually existed between them.

"So you've lost her, sleek and clean," said the talkative Joslyn to Walter, who replied that "it was difficult losing what one never had," and said distinctly that "he did not aspire to the honor of Miss Graham's hand."

But whether he did or not, the story he had heard was not calculated to improve his state of mind, and his dejection was plainly visible upon his face when he at last reached home.

"Jessie was up among the pines," Aunt Debby said, advising him "to join her and cheer her up a bit, for she seemed desput low spirited since Mr. Bellenger went away."

Had Aunt Debby wished to keep Walter from Jessie, she could not have devised a better plan than this, for the high-spirited young man had no intention of intruding upon a grief caused by William Bellenger's absence, and hour after hour Jessie sat alone among the pines, starting at every sound, and once, when sure a footstep

was near, hiding behind a rock, "so as to make him think she wasn't there." Then, when the footsteps proved to be a rabbit's tread, she crept back to her seat upon the grass, and pouted because it was not Walter.

"He might know I'd be lonesome," she said, "after receiving so much attention, and he ought to entertain me a little, if only to pay for all father has done for him. If there is anything I dislike, it is ingratitude," and having reached this point, Jessie burst into tears, though why she should cry she could not tell.

She only knew that she was very warm and very uncomfortable, and that it did her good to cry, so she lay with her face in the grass, while the rabbit came several times very near, and at last fled away as a heavier, firmer step approached.

It was not likely Jessie would stay in the pines all the afternoon, Walter thought, and as the sun drew near the western horizon, he said to his grandfather :

"I will go for the cows to-night just as I used to do," and though the pasture where they fed lay in the opposite direction from the pines, he bent his footsteps toward the latter place, and came suddenly upon Jessie, who was sobbing like a child.

"Jessie," he exclaimed, laying his hand gently upon her arm, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing," she replied, "only I'm lonesome and homesick, and I wish I'd gone to New York with Mr. Belenger."

"Why didn't you then?" was Walter's cool reply, and Jessie answered, angrily :

"I would if I had known what I do now."

"And pray what do you know now?" Walter asked, in the same cold, calm tone, which so exasperated Jessie that she replied:

"I know you hate me, and I know you didn't write all that valedictory, and everything."

"Jessie," Walter said, sternly, "what do you mean about that valedictory. Come, sit by me and tell me at once."

In Walter's voice there was a tone which, as a child, Jessie had been wont to obey, and now at his command she stole timidly to his side upon the rustic bench, and told him all her suspicions, and the source from which they originated.

There was a sudden flash of anger in Walter's eye at his cousin's meanness, and then, with a merry laugh, he said:

"And it sounded familiar to you, too, did it? Some parts of it might, I'll admit, for you had heard them before. Do you remember being at an examination in Wilbraham, when I took the prize in composition, or rather declamation? It was said then that my essay was far beyond my years, and I am inclined to think it was; for I have written nothing since which pleased me half so well. I was appointed valedictorian, as you know, and in preparing my oration I selected a few of those old ideas and embodied them in language to suit the occasion. I am hardly willing to call it plagiarism, stealing from myself, and I am sure you would never have recognized it either if Mr. Bellenger had not roused your suspicions. Is my explanation satisfactory?"

It was perfectly so, for Jessie now remembered where she had heard something like Walter's valedictory, and with her doubts removed she became much like herself again, though she would not admit that William's insinuations were mere fabrications of his own. He never heard it before, she knew, but some of Walter's old Wilbraham associates might have been present and said in his hearing that it seemed familiar, and then it would be quite natural for him to think so too.

Walter did not dispute her, but said :

"What else did my amiable cousin say against me?"

Clasping her hands over her burning face, Jessie answered faintly :

"He told me that your father had done a horrible thing, though he didn't explain what it was. I knew before that there was something unpleasant, and once asked father about it, but he wouldn't tell, and I want so much to know. What was it, Walter?"

For a moment Walter hesitated, then drawing Jessie nearer to him, he replied :

"It will pain me greatly to tell you that sad story, but I would rather you should hear it from my lips than from any other," and then, unmindful of the cows, which, having waited long for their accustomed summons, were slowly wending their way homeward, he began the story as follows :

"You know that old stone building on the hill near the village, and you have heard also that it was a flourishing high school for girls. There one pleasant summer my mother came. She was spending several months

with a family who occupied what is now that huge old ruin down by the river side. Mother was beautiful, they say, and so my father thought, for every leisure moment found him at her side."

"But wasn't she a great deal richer than he," Jessie asked, unconscious of the pang her question inflicted upon her companion, who replied :

"Yes, he was poor, while Ellen Bellenger was rich, but she had a soul above the foolish distinction the world will make between the wealthy and the working class. She loved my father, and he loved her. At last they were engaged, and then he proposed writing to her parents, as he would do nothing dishonorable ; but she begged him not to do it, for she knew how proud they were, and that they would take her home at once. And so, in an unguarded moment they went together over the line into New York, where they were married. The Bellengers, of course, were fearfully enraged, denouncing her at once, and bidding her never cross their threshold again. But this only drew her nearer to her husband, who fairly worshipped her, as did the entire family,—for she lived in the old gable-roofed house,—and was happy in that little room which we call yours now. Father was anxious that she should have everything she wanted, and it is said was sometimes very extravagant, buying for her costly luxuries which he could not well afford."

"But *my* father," said Jessie. "What had he to do with it?"

"Everything," returned Walter, with bitterness, "Old Mr. Graham had a bank in Deerwood. Your father was



cashier, while mine was teller, and in consideration of a large remuneration, performed a menial's part, such as sweeping the rooms, building the fires in winter, and of course he kept the keys. They were great friends, Richard Graham and Seth Marshall, and people likened them to David and Jonathan. At last one of the large bills my father had made came due, and on that very night the bank was robbed of more than a thousand dollars."

"Oh, Walter, how could he do it?" cried Jessie, and Walter replied:

"He didn't! He was as innocent as I, who was then unborn. Listen while I tell you. There was in town a dissipated, good-natured fellow, named Heyward, who had sometimes taught singing-school, and sometimes fiddled for country dances. No one knew how he managed to subsist, for he dressed well, travelled a great deal, and was very liberal with his money, when he had any. Still none suspected him of dishonesty; he did not know enough for that, they said. Everybody liked him, and when on that night he came to our house, apparently intoxicated, and asked for a shelter, grandfather bade him stay, and assigned him a back room in which was an outer door. In the morning he was, or seemed to be, still in a drunken sleep. Your father brought the news of the robbery, and while he talked he looked suspiciously at mine, especially when my mother said innocently:

"The burglars must have tried this house, too, for I woke in the night, and finding my husband gone, called to him to know where he was. Presently he came in, say-

ing he thought he heard a noise and got up to find what it was.'

"When she said this Mr. Graham changed color, and pointing to my father's shoes, which stood upon the hearth, he asked:

"'How came these so muddy? It was not raining at bedtime last night.'

"This was true. A heavy storm had arisen after ten and subsided before twelve, so that the shoes must have been worn since that hour, as there was fresh dirt still upon them. The robber had been tracked to our door, while there were corresponding marks from our door to the bank. My father's shoes just fitted in these tracks, for they measured them with the wretched man looking on in a kind of torpid apathy, as if utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of what he saw; but when Richard, his best friend, whispered to him softly, 'Confess it, Seth. Give up the money and it won't go so hard against you,' the truth burst upon him, and he dropped to the ground like one scathed with the lightning's stroke. For hours he lay in that death-like swoon, and when he came back to consciousness he was guarded by the officers of the law. They led him off in the care of a constable, he all the time protesting his innocence, save at intervals when he refused to speak, but sat with a look upon his face as if bereft of reason.

"The examination came on and the upper room, where the court was held, was crowded to overflowing, all anxious to gain a sight of my father, though they had known him from boyhood up. Grandpa was there, and

close behind sat or rather crouched my wretched mother. She would not be kept back, and with a face as white as marble, and hands locked firmly together, she sat to hear the testimony. Once the counsel for my father thought to clear him by throwing suspicion upon Heyward, who with a most foolish expression upon his face had declared that he heard nothing during the night. People would rather it had been he than Seth Marshall, and the tide was turning in favor of the latter when Richard Graham was called to the stand. He was known to be my father's dearest friend, and the audience waited breathlessly to hear what he would say. He testified that, having been very restless, he got up about two o'clock in the morning, and as his window commanded a full view of the bank, he naturally looked in that direction. The moon was setting, but he could still discern objects with tolerable distinctness, and he saw a man come out of the bank, lock the door, put the key in his pocket, and hurry down the street. My father then wore a light gray coat and cap of the same color, so did this man, and thinking it must be he, Mr. Graham called him by name; but if he heard he did not stop. Mr. Graham then remembered that the day before my father had procured some medicine for my mother, and had forgotten to take it home. This threw some light upon the matter, and thinking that mother had probably been taken suddenly ill and my father had gone for the medicine, Mr. Graham retired again to rest, and gave it no further thought until the robbery was discovered.

“Do you believe the man you saw leaving the bank

to have been the prisoner ?" asked the lawyer, and for an instant Mr. Graham hesitated, for with the white stony face of his early friend upturned to his and the supplicating eyes of the young wife fixed upon him, how could he answer yes ? But he did, Jessie,—he did it at last. He said, 'I do,' and over the white face there passed a look of agony which wrung a groan even from your father's lips, while the pale young creature not far away rocked to and fro in her hopeless desolation."

"Oh, Walter, Walter !" cried Jessie, "don't tell me any more. I see now so plain that fair girl-wife crouching on the floor and my father testifying against her. How could he ?"

Walter had asked himself that question many a time, and his bosom had swelled with resentment at the act ; but now, when Jessie, too, questioned the justice of the proceeding, he answered :

"It was right I suppose,—all right. Mr. Graham believed that to which he testified, and when he left the stand he wound his arms around my father's neck and said :

"'God forgive me, Seth, I couldn't help it.'"

"But he could," said Jessie ; "he needn't have told all he knew."

Walter made no reply to this ; he merely went on with his story :

"Then the decision came. There was proof sufficient for the case to be presented before the grand jury, and unless bail could be found to the amount of one thousand dollars, my father must go to jail, there to await his trial

at the county court, which would hold its next session in three weeks. When the decision was made known, my father pressed his hands tightly over his heart for a moment, and then he clasped them to his ears as the deep stillness in the room was broken by the plaintive cry :

“ ‘ Save my husband, somebody. Oh, save my darling husband !’ ”

“ The next moment my mother fell at his feet, a crushed, lifeless thing, her hair falling down her face, and a blue, pinched look about her lips, while my father bent over her, his tears falling like rain upon her face. Everybody cried, and when the question was asked, ‘ Who will go the prisoner’s bail ?’ your father answered aloud :

“ ‘ I will.’ ”

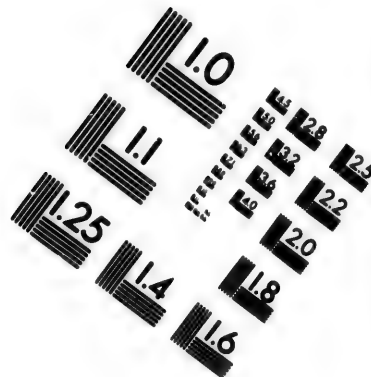
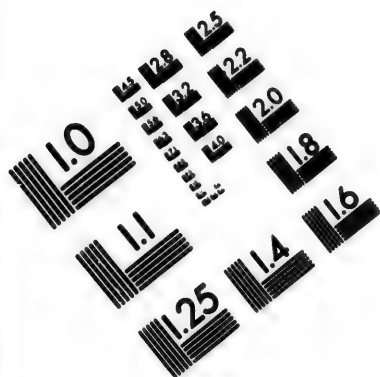
“ Oh, I am so glad !” gasped Jessie, while Walter continued :

“ With Mr. Graham for security, they let my poor father go home ; but a mighty blow had fallen upon him, benumbing all his faculties ; he could neither think, nor talk, nor act, but would sit all day with mother’s hands in his, gazing into her face and whispering sometimes :

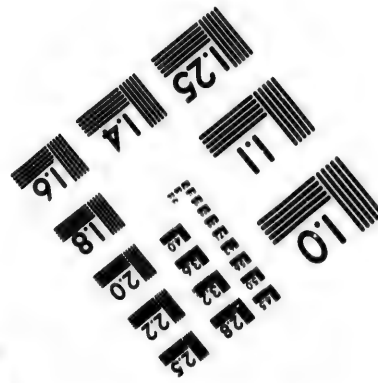
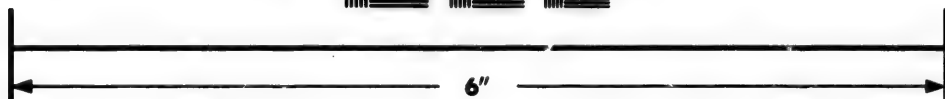
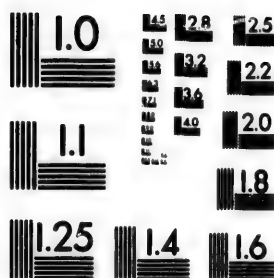
“ ‘ What will my darling do when I am in State prison ?’ ”

“ Such would be his fate, everybody said. It could not be avoided, and in a kind of feverish despair he waited the result. Your father was with him often, ‘ keeping watch,’ the villagers said ; but if so he was not vigilant enough, for one dark, stormy night, the last before the dreadful sitting of the court, when the wind roared and





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howled about the old farm-house, and the heavy autumnal rain beat against the windows, my father drew his favorite chair, the one which always stands in that dark corner, and which none save you have ever used since then, he drew it, I say, to my mother's side, and winding his arms about her neck, he said :

“‘Ellen, do you believe me guilty?’

“‘No, never for a moment,’ she replied, and he continued :

“‘Heaven bless you, precious one, for that. Teach our child to think the same, and give it a father's blessing.’

“My mother was too much bewildered to answer, and with a kiss upon her lips, my father turned to his father and standing up before him, said :

“‘I know what's in your heart; but, father, I swear to you that I am innocent. Bless me, father—bless your only boy once more.’

“Then grandpa put his trembling hand upon the brown locks of his son, and said :

“‘I would lay down my life to know that you are not guilty; but I bless you all the same, and may God bless you too, my boy!’

“In the bedroom grandmother lay sick, and kneeling by her side, my father said to her :

“‘Do you believe I did it?’

“‘No,’ she answered faintly, and without his asking it, she gave him her blessing.

“He kissed his sister,—kissed Aunt Debby, and then he went away. They saw his face, white as a corpse, pressed against the window pane, while his eyes were

riveted upon his beautiful young wife,—then the face was gone, and only the storm went sobbing past the place where he had stood. All that night the light burned on the table, and they waited his return, but from that hour to this he has not come back. He could not go to prison, and so he ran away. Mr. Graham paid the bail, and he was heard to say that he was glad poor Seth escaped. I did not quite understand the matter when I was a boy, and I almost hated your father for testifying against him, but I know now he did what he thought was right. It is said he loved my Aunt Mary, Ellen's mother, and that she loved him in return, but after this sad affair there arose a coolness between them. He went to New York and married a more fashionable woman, while she, too, chose another."

"Did they ever find the money?" Jessie asked, and Walter replied:

"Never, though Aunt Debby says that Heyward indulged in a new suit of clothes soon after, and gave various other tokens of being abundantly supplied. No one knows where he is now, for he left Deerwood years ago."

"And your mother," interrupted Jessie, "tell me more of her."

The night shadows were falling, and she could not see the look of pain on Walter's face as he replied:

"For a few days she watched to see father coming back, for suspense was more terrible than reality, and those who were his friends before said his going off looked badly. From Boston her proud relatives sent her a double curse for bringing this disgrace upon them, and

then she took her bed, never to rise again. The first October frosts had fallen when they laid me in her arms and bade her live for her baby's sake. But five days after I was born she lay dead beneath that western window where you so often sit. Then the proud mother relented and came to the funeral, but she has never been here since. Your father was present, too—he bought the monument; he cried over me, and wished that he could fill my father's place."

"I wish he could, too," cried the impulsive Jessie, "I wish you were my brother," and she involuntarily laid her hand in his. "Have you never heard from your father?" she asked, and Walter replied:

"Only once. Six months after mother died he wrote to Mr. Graham from Texas, and that is the very last. But, Jessie, I shall find him. I shall prove him innocent, and until then there will always be a load in my heart,—a something which makes me irritable, cross and jealous of those I love the best, lest they should despise me for what I cannot help."

"And is that why you speak so coldly to me sometimes when I don't deserve it?" Jessie asked, twining her snowy fingers about his own.

Oh, how Walter longed to fold her in his arms and tell her how dear she was to him, and that because he loved her so much he was oftenest harsh with her. But he dared not. She would not listen to such words, he knew. She thought of him as her brother, and he would not disturb the dream, so he answered her gently:

"Am I cross to you, Jessie? I do not mean to be, and

now that you know all, I will be so no longer. You do not hate me, do you, because of my misfortune?"

"Hate you, Walter! Oh, no! I love,—I mean I like you so much better than I did when I came up here this afternoon and cried with my face in the grass. I pity you, Walter, for it seems terrible to live with that disgrace hanging over you."

Walter winced at these last words, and Jessie as if speaking more to herself than him, continued:

"I hope Will won't tell grandma who you are, for she is so proud that she might make me feel very uncomfortable, by fretting every time I spoke to you. Walter," and the tone of Jessie's voice led Walter to expect some unpleasant remark, "you know father has intended to have you live with us, but if William tells grandma, it will be better for you to board somewhere else,—grandma can be very disagreeable if she tries, and she would annoy us almost to death."

Jessie was perfectly innocent in all she said, but spite of his recent promise Walter felt his old jealousy rising up, and whispering to him that Jessie spoke for herself rather than her grandmother. With a great effort, however, he mastered the emotion and replied:

"It will be better, I think, and I will write to your father at once."

Jessie little dreamed what it cost Walter thus deliberately to give up seeing her every day, and living with her beneath the same roof. It had been the goal to which he had looked forward through all his college course, for when he entered on his first year Mr. Graham had written:

"After you are graduated I shall take you into business, and into my own family, as if you were my son."

And Jessie herself had vetoed this,—had said it must not be.

For an instant Walter felt that he would not go to New York at all; but when he saw how closely Jessie nestled to his side, and heard her say, "You can come to see me every day, and when I am going to concerts, or the opera, I shall always send word to you by father," he rejected his first suspicion as unjust.

She was not ashamed of him,—she only wished to screen him from her grandmother's ill nature, and winding his arm around her, he said :

"You are a good girl, Jessie, and I'm glad you think of me as a brother."

But he was not glad. He did not wish her to be his sister, but he tried to make himself believe he did, and as in the pines where they sat it was already very dark, he proposed their returning home. Jessie was unusually silent during the walk, for she was thinking of Walter's young mother, and as they passed the grave-yard in the distance, she sighed :

"Poor dear lady! I don't wonder you are often sad with that memory haunting you."

"I should not be sad," he returned, "if I could bring the world to my opinion; but nearly all except Aunt Debby believe him guilty."

"Does my father?" asked Jessie, and as Walter replied "Yes," she rejoined: "Then I'm afraid I think so too, for father knows; but," she hastily added, as she felt the

gesture of impatience Walter made, "I like you just the same,—yes, a great deal better than before I heard the story. It isn't as bad as I supposed, and I am so glad you told it. Will Bellenger won't make me distrust you again."

By this time they had reached the house, where the deacon sat smoking his accustomed pipe, and saying to Walter as he entered:

"Where are the cows you went after more than three hours ago?"

Walter colored, and so did Jessie, while the matter-of-fact Aunt Debby rejoined:

"Why, Amos, the cows is milked and the cream is nigh about riz."

That night, after all had retired except the deacon and Walter, the former said to his grandson:

"What kept you and Jessie so late?"

"I was telling her of my father, and why he went away," returned Walter.

The deacon groaned as he always did when that subject was mentioned,—then after a moment he added:

"I am glad it was no worse,—that is, I'm glad you are not betraying Mr. Graham's trust by making love to his daughter."

Walter was very pale, but he did not speak, and his grandfather continued:

"I am old, Walter, but I have not forgotten the days when I was young; and remembering my disposition then, I can see why you should love Jessie Graham. God bless her! She's worthy of any man's best love, and



she's wound herself around my old heart till the sound of her voice is sweet to me almost as Ellen's; but she isn't for you Walter. I know Mr. Graham better than you do. He's noble and good, but very proud, and the daughter of a millionaire must never marry the son of a poor——"

"Don't!" cried Walter, catching his grandfather's arm. "I understand it all,—I know that I am poor, know what the world says of my father, and I will suffer through all time sooner than ask the bright-faced Jessie to share one iota of our shame. But were my father innocent, I would never rest until I made myself a name which even Jessie Graham would not despise, for I love her, grandpa,—love her better than my life," and as after this confession he could not look his grandfather in the face, he stared hard at the candle dying in its socket, as if he would fain read there some token that what he so much desired would one day come to pass.

And he did read it too, for with a last great effort the expiring flame sent up a flash of light, which shone on Walter's face and that of the gray-haired man regarding him with a look of tender pity. Then it passed away, and the darkness fell between them just as the old man said, mournfully :

"There is no hope, my boy,—no hope for you."



## CHAPTER VI.

OLD MRS. BARTOW.

THE good lady sat in her chamber wiping the perspiration from her ruddy face, and occasionally peering out into the pleasant street, with a longing desire to escape from her self-imposed prison, and breathe the air again in her accustomed walks. But this she dared not do, lest it should be discovered that she was not away from home and enjoying some little pent-up room in the third story of a crowded hotel. Occasionally, too, she thought with a sigh of the clover fields, the fresh, green grass and shadowy woods, where Jessie was really enjoying herself, without the trouble of dressing three times a day, and then swelling with vexation because some one else out-did her.

"If she don't come with William, I mean to go down there and see what this family are like that she makes such a fuss about," she said. "Marshall? Marshall? The name sounds familiar, but it isn't likely I ever knew them. If I supposed I had, I wouldn't stir a step."

At this point in her soliloquy a servant appeared, saying "Mr. Bellenger wished to see her," and putting in her teeth, for it tired her to wear them all the time, and adjusting her lace cap, the old lady went down to meet the young man, who had just returned from Deerwood.

Numberless were the questions she asked concerning her granddaughter. Was she well? was she happy? was she sun-burned? were her hands scratched with briars? and what kind of people were these Marshalls?

To this last William hastened to reply:

"Clever country people, very kind to Jessie, and well they may be, for if I've the least discernment, they hope to have her in their family one of these days."

"What can you mean?" and the old lady's salts were brought into frequent use, while William, in his peculiar way, told her of Walter Marshall, who he said "was undoubtedly presuming enough to aspire to Jessie's hand."

"What, that boy that Richard educated?" Mrs. Bartow asked, growing very red and very warm withal.

"Yes," returned William; "but the fact of his being a charity student is not the worst feature in the case. It pains me greatly to talk upon the subject, but duty requires me to tell you just who Walter is," and assuming a half-reluctant, half-mortified tone, Will told Mrs. Bartow how Walter was connected with himself and the "terrible disgrace" of which she had written to Jessie in her last letter.

For a moment the old lady fancied herself choking to death, but she managed at last to scream:

"You don't say that he has dared to think of Jessie, the daughter of a millionaire, and the granddaughter of a——"

She was too much overcome to finish the sentence, and she sank back in her chair, while her cap-strings floated up and down with the rapid motion of her fan.

"I'll go for her at once," she said, when at last she found her voice. "I'll see this Mr. Impudence for myself. I'll teach him what is what. Oh, I hope Mrs. Reeves won't find it out. Don't tell her, Mr. Bellenger."

"I am as anxious to conceal the fact as you are," he replied, "for he, you know, is a relative of mine, although our family do not acknowledge him." And having done all he came to do, the nice young man departed, while the greatly disturbed lady began to pack her trunk preparatory to a start for Deerwood.

In the midst of her preparations she was surprised by the unexpected return of Mr. Graham, to whom she at once disclosed the cause of her distress, asking him "if he wished his daughter to marry Walter Marshall, whose father was a——"

She didn't quite know what, for William had not made that point very clear.

"I do not wish her to marry any one as yet," returned Mr. Graham, at the same time asking if Walter had proposed, or shown any signs of so doing.

"Of course he's shown signs," returned Mrs. Bartow, "but I trust Jessie has enough of the Stanwood about her to keep him at a proper distance."

"Enough of the what?" asked Mr. Graham, with the least possible smile playing about his mouth.

"Well, enough of the Bartow," returned the lady. "The very idea of receiving into our family a person of his antecedents!"

In a few words Mr. Graham gave her his opinion of Walter Marshall, adding:

"I do not say that I would like him to marry Jessie,—very likely I should not,—and still, if I knew that she loved him and he loved her, I should not think it my duty to oppose them seriously, though I would rather, of course, that the unfortunate affair of his father's had never occurred."

This was all the satisfaction Mrs. Bartow could gain from him, and doubly strengthened in her determination to remove Jessie from Walter's society, she started the next morning for Deerwood, reaching there toward the close of the day succeeding Jessie's interview with Walter in the pines.

"Not this tumble-down shanty, surely?" she said to the omnibus driver when he stopped before the gate of the farm-house.

"Yes'm, this is Deacon Marshall's," he replied, and mounting his box again he drove off, while she went slowly up the walk, casting contemptuous glances at the well-sweep, the smoke-house, the bee-hives, the holly-hocks, poppies and pinks, which, in spite of herself, carried her back to a time, years and years and years ago, when she had lived in just such a place as this, save that it was not so cheerful or so neat.

Aunt Debby was the first to spy her, and she called to her niece:

"Why, Mary, just look-a-here! There's a lady all dressed up in her meetin' clothes, a-comin' in. I wish we had mopped the kitchen floor to-day. There, she's gone to the front door. I presume the gals has littered the front hall till it's a sight to behold."

Mrs. Bartow's loud knock was now distinctly heard, and as Mrs. Howland had not quite finished her afternoon toilet, Aunt Debby herself went to answer the summons. Holding fast to her knitting, with the ball rolling after her, and Jessie's kitten running after that, she presented herself before her visitor, courtesying very low, and asking if "she'd walk into the t'other room, or into the kitchen, where it was a great deal cooler."

Mrs. Bartow chose the "t'other room," and taking the Boston rocker, asked "if Miss Graham was staying here?"

"You mean Jessie," returned Aunt Debby. "It's so cool this afternoon that she's gone out ridin' hoss-back in the mountains with Walter and Ellen. Be you any of her kin?"

"I'm her grandmother, and have come to take her home," answered the lady, frowning wrathfully at the idea of Jessie's riding with Walter Marshall.

"I want to know!" returned Aunt Debby. "We'll be desput sorry to lose her jest as Walter has come home, and he thinks so much of her, too."

Mrs. Bartow was too indignant to speak, but Aunt Debby, who was not at all suspicious, talked on just the same, praising first Walter, then Ellen, then Jessie, and then giving an outline history of her whole family, even including Seth, who she said "allus was a good boy."

If Aunt Debby expected a return of confidence she was mistaken, for Mrs. Bartow had nothing to say of her family, and after a little Aunt Debby began to question her. Was she city-born, and if not, where was she born?

"That red mark on your chin makes me think of a girl, Patty Loomis by name, that I used to know in Hopkinton," she said, and the mark upon the chin grew redder as she continued, "I did housework there once, in Squire Fielding's family, and this Patty that I was tellin' you about done chores in a family close by. She was some younger than me, but I remember her by that mark, similar to your'n, and because she was connected to them three Thayers that was hung in York State for killin' John Love. There was some han'some verses made about it, and I used to sing the whole of 'em, but my memory's failin' me now. I wonder what's become of Patty. I haven't thought of her before in an age. I heard that a rich old widder took her for her own child, and that's all I ever knew. She was smart as steel, and could milk seven cows while I was milkin' three. There they come, on the full canter of course. Ellen 'll get her neck broke some day," and greatly to the relief of Mrs. Bartow she changed the conversation from Patty Loomis and the three Thayers who were hung, to the three riders dashing up to the gate, Jessie a little in advance, with her black curls streaming out from under her riding hat, and her cheeks glowing with exercise.

"Why, grandma!" she exclaimed, as holding up her long skirt, she bounded into the house, and nearly upset the old lady before she was aware of her presence. "Where in the world did you come from? Isn't it pleasant and nice out here?" and throwing off her hat, Jessie sat down by the window to cool herself after her rapid ride.



"Why, grandma, you are as cross as two sticks," she said, when Aunt Debby had left the room, and grandma replied:

"That's a very lady-like expression. Learned it of Mr. Marshall, I suppose."

"No, I didn't," returned Jessie. "I learned it of Will Bellenger when he was here. It's his favorite expression. Did he bring you my note?"

"Certainly; and I've come down to see what the attraction is which keeps you here so contentedly."

"Oh, it's so nice," returned Jessie, and Mrs. Bartow rejoined:

"I should think it was. Who ever heard of a bed in the parlor now-a-days?" and she cast a rueful glance at the snowy mountain in the corner.

"That's a little out of date, I know," answered Jessie; "but the house is rather small, and they keep the spare bed in here for such visitors as you are. The sheets are all of Aunt Debby's make, she spun the linen on a wheel that treads so funny. Did you ever see a little wheel, grandma?"

The question reminded Mrs. Bartow of Patty Loomis and the three Thayers, and she did not reply directly to it, but said instead:

"What did you call that woman?"

"Aunt Debby Marshall, the deacon's sister," returned Jessie, and Mrs. Bartow relapsed into a thoughtful mood, from which she was finally aroused by hearing Walter's voice in the kitchen.

Instantly she glanced at Jessie, who involuntarily

blushed ; and then the old lady commenced the battle at once, telling Jessie plainly that "she had come down to take her home before she disgraced them all by suffering a boy of Walter Marshall's reputation to make love to her."

"Walter never thought of making love to me," returned the astonished and slightly indignant Jessie ; "and if he had it wouldn't have been anybody's business but mine and father's. He isn't a boy, either. He's a splendid-looking man. Pa thinks the world of him ; and he knows, too, about that old affair, which wasn't half as bad as Will and Mrs. Reeves seem to think. Walter told it to me last night up in the pines, and I'll tell it to you. It wasn't murder nor anything like it. Now, even I shouldn't wish it said that any of my friends were hung."

"Hung !" repeated the old lady. "Who said anybody's friends were hung ? It's false !" and the red mark around the lip wore a scarlet hue.

"Of course it's false," answered Jessie. "That's what I said. Nobody knows for certain that he stole, either," and forgetting her own belief, founded on her father's, Jessie tried to prove that Seth Marshall was as innocent as Walter himself had declared him to be.

"Whether he's guilty or not," returned Mrs. Bartow, "you are going home, and you're to have nothing to say to Walter. It would sound pretty, wouldn't it, for Mrs. Reeves to be telling that Jessie Graham liked a poor charity boy ?"

Jessie was proud, and the last words grated harshly, but she would stand by Walter, so she replied :

"Mrs. Reeves forever! I believe you'd stop breathing if she said it was fashionable. I wonder who she was in her young days. Somebody not half so good as Walter, I dare say. I mean to ask Aunt Debby. She has lived since the flood, and knows the history of everybody that ever was born in New England, or out of it, either, for that matter."

Mrs. Bartow was not inclined to doubt this after her own experience, and as in case there was anything about Mrs. Reeves, she wished to know it, she secretly hoped Jessie would carry her threat into execution. Just then they were summoned to supper, and following her granddaughter into the pleasant sitting-room, Mrs. Bartow frowned majestically upon Walter, bowed coldly to the other members of the family, and then took her seat, thinking to herself:

"The boy has a little of the Bellenger look, and, if anything, is handsomer than William."

The tea being passed, with the biscuit and butter and honey, and the cheese contemptuously refused by the city guest, Jessie said to Aunt Debby:

"Did you ever know anybody by the name of Gregory? That was Mrs. Reeves' maiden name, wasn't it, grandma?"

Mrs. Bartow nodded, and Aunt Debby, after withdrawing within herself for a moment, came out again and said:

"Yes, I knew Tim and Ben Gregory in Spencer. Ben was the best of the two, but he wa'n't none too likely. He had six boys, and Tim had six gals."

"What were their names?" asked Jessie, and Aunt Debby replied:

"There was Zeruah, and Lyddy, and Charlotty——"

"That'll do!" cried Jessie, her delight dancing in her eyes. "What was their father, and where are the girls now?"

"Their father was a tin peddler, and what he didn't get that way folks said he used to steal, though they never proved it ag'in him. Charlotty and I was 'bout of an age."

"I knew she was older than she pretended," thought Mrs. Bartow, and in her joy at having probably discovered her dear friend's genealogy, she took two biscuits instead of one.

"She worked in Lester factory a spell, and then, after she was quite along in years, say thirty or more, she married somebody who was a store-keeper, and went somewhere, and I believe I've heard that she finally moved to New York."

"Can't you think of her husband's name," persisted Jessie, and Aunt Debby replied:

"Twan't very far from Reed, but it's so long ago, and I've been through so much since, that I can't justly remember."

Neither was it necessary that she should, for Mrs. Bartow and Jessie were satisfied with what she could remember, and nothing doubting that Charlotte Gregory was now the exceedingly aristocratic and purse-proud Mrs. Reeves, whose granddaughter was a kind of rival to Jessie, they returned to the parlor, Mrs. Bartow repeating at intervals:

"A tin peddler and a factory girl, and she holding her head so high."

"She's none the worse for that, if she'd behave herself, and not put on such airs," said Jessie. "I wouldn't wonder if some of my ancestors were tinkers or chimney sweeps. I mean to ask Aunt Debby. Let's see. Your name wasn't really Martha Stanwood, was it? Weren't you an adopted child?"

"Jessie!" and in the startled lady's voice there was such unmitigated alarm and distress that Jessie turned quickly to look at her. "Do let that old crone alone. If there's anything I hate it's a person that knows everybody's history, they are so disagreeable, and make one so uncomfortable, though I'm glad to be sure, that I've found out who Mrs. Reeves was. Just to think how she talks about high birth and all that,—born in a garret, I dare say."

"She don't put on a bit more than you do," said the saucy Jessie, thinking to herself that she would some time quiz Aunt Debby concerning her grandmother's past.

That night, after Jessie had retired, Mrs. Bartow asked for a few moments' conversation with Walter, to whom she had scarcely spoken the entire evening. Quick to detect a slight, he assumed his haughtiest bearing, and rather overawed the old lady, who fidgetted in her chair, and pulled at her cap, and then began:

"It is very unpleasant for me to say to you what I must, but duty—to Miss Graham, and justice to you, demands that I should speak. From things which I have heard and seen, I infer that you,—or rather I'm afraid that you,—in short, it's just possible you are thinking too much of Miss Graham," and having gotten thus far,

the old lady gave a sigh of relief, while the young man, with a proud inclination of the head, said coolly :

“ And what then ? ”

This roused her, and muttering to herself, “ Such impudence ! ” she continued :

“ I should suppose your own sense would tell you what then ! Of course nothing can ever come of it, for even were you her equal in rank and wealth, you must know there is a stain upon your name which must never be imparted to the Grahams. ”

“ Madam, ” said Walter, “ you will please confine your remarks to me personally, and say nothing of my father. ”

“ Well, then, ” returned the lady. “ You, personally, are not a fit husband for Jessie. ”

“ Have I ever asked to be her husband ? ” he said.

“ Not in words, perhaps, but you show it in your manner both to me and others, and this is what brought me here. Jessie is young and easily influenced, and might possibly, in an unguarded moment, do as foolish a thing as your mother did. ”

There was a feeling of intense delight beaming in Walter's eyes, for the idea that Jessie could in any way be induced to marry him was a blissful one ; but it quickly passed off as Mrs. Bartow continued :

“ It would break her father's heart should she thus throw herself away, while you would prove yourself most ungrateful for all he has done for you. ”

This was touching Walter in a tender point, and the pride of his nature flashed in his dark eyes as he replied :

"Let me know Mr. Graham's wishes, and they shall be obeyed."

"Well, then," returned the lady, "I asked him if he would like to have his daughter marry you, and he replied—" she hesitated before uttering the falsehood, while Walter bent forward eagerly to listen. "He said he certainly would not, and with his approbation I came down to remove her from temptation."

Walter was very white, and something like a groan escaped him, for he felt that Jessie was indeed wrested from him, and he began to see that he had always cherished a secret hope of winning her some day. But the dream was over now. She, he knew, would never disobey her father, while he himself would not return the many kindnesses received from his benefactor with ingratitude.

"Tell Mr. Graham from me," he said at last, almost in a whisper, "that he need have no fears, for I pledge you my word of honor that I will never ask Jessie Graham to be my wife, unless the time should come when I am by the world acknowledged her equal, and when I promise this, Mrs. Bartow, I tear out, as it were, the dearest, purest affection of my heart, for I do love Jessie Graham; I see it now as clearly as I see that I must kill that love. Not because you ask it of me, Madam," and he assumed a haughty tone, "but because it is the wish of the best friend I ever knew. He need not fear when I am with her in New York. I will keep my place, whatever that may be, and when I call on Jessie, as I shall sometimes do, it will be a brother's call, and nothing more. Will you be satisfied with this?"



"Yes, more than satisfied," and Mrs. Bartow offered him her hand.

He took it mechanically, and as he turned away the lady thought to herself:

"He is a noble fellow, and so handsome, too, but William looks almost as well. Didn't he give it up quick when I mentioned Mr. Graham. I wonder if that was a lie I told. I only left off a little, that was all," and framing excuses for her duplicity, the old lady retired for the night.

They were to leave in the morning, and Jessie seemed unusually sad when she came out to breakfast, for the inmates of the farm-house were very dear to her.

"You'll come to New York soon, won't you?" she said to Walter, when, after breakfast, she joined him under the maple tree.

At the sound of her voice he started, and looking down into her bright, sunny face, felt a thrill of pain. Involuntarily he took her hand in his, and said:

"I have been thinking that I may not come at all."

"Why, Walter, yes you will; father will be so disappointed. I believe he anticipates it even more than I."

"But your grandmother," he suggested, and Jessie rejoined:

"Don't mind grandma; she's always fidgetty if anybody looks at me, but when she sees that we really and truly are brother and sister, she'll get over it."

There was a tremulous tone in Jessie's voice, as she said this, and it fell very sweetly on Walter's ear, for it said to him that he might possibly be something more than a

brother to the beautiful girl who stood before him with blushing cheeks and half-averted eyes.

"Jessie, Jessie!" called Mrs. Bartow from the house, and Jessie ran in to finish packing her trunks and don her travelling dress.

Once, as Aunt Debby slipped into her satchel a paper of "doughnuts and cheese, to save buying a dinner," Jessie could not forbear saying:

"Oh, Aunt Debby! I think I know that Charlotty Gregory, who used to live in Leicester. She's Mrs. Reeves now, and the greatest lady in New York; rides in her carriage with colored coachman and footman in livery, wears a host of diamonds, and lives in a brown stone house up town."

"Wall, if I ever," Aunt Debby exclaimed, sitting down in her surprise on Mrs. Bartow's bonnet, "Reeves was the name, come to think. Drives a nigger, did you say? She used to be as black as one herself, but a clever, lively gal for all of that. With her first earnin's in the factory she bought her mother a calico gown, and her sister Betsey a pair of shoes."

"Betsey," repeated Jessie, turning to her grandmother, "that must be Mrs. Reeves' invalid sister, whom Charlotte calls Aunt Lizzie. Very few people ever see her."

"Wa'n't over bright," whispered Aunt Debby, continuing aloud: "How I'd like to see Miss Reeves once more. Give her my regrets, and tell her if I should ever come to the city I shall call on her; but she musn't feel hurt if I don't. I'm getting old fast."

Jessie laughed aloud as she fancied Mrs. Reeves' amaze-

ment at receiving Aunt Debby's regrets, and as the omnibus was by that time at the door, she hastened her preparations, and soon stood at the gate, bidding her friends good-by. For an instant Walter held her hand in his, but his manner was constrained, and Jessie bit her lip to keep back the tears which finally found a lodgment on Ellen's neck. The two young girls were tenderly attached, and both wept bitterly at parting, Jessie crying for Ellen and Walter, too, and Ellen for Jessie and the man whom she, ere long, would meet.

"What shall I tell Will for you?" Jessie asked, leaning from the omnibus and looking in Ellen's face, which had never been so white and thin before.

From the maple tree above her head a withered leaf came rustling down and fell upon Ellen's hair. Brushing it away, she answered mournfully:

"Tell him the leaves are beginning to fade."

"That's a strange message for her to send, but she speaks the truth," Walter thought, and after the omnibus had rolled away, and he walked slowly to the house, he felt that for him more than the leaves were fading,—that the blossoms of hope which he had nurtured in his heart were torn from their roots, and dying beneath the chilly breath of fashion and caste.



## CHAPTER VII.

HUMAN NATURE.  

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IT was the night of Charlotte Reeves' grand party, which had been talked about for weeks, and more than one passer-by paused in the keen February air to look at the brilliantly-lighted house, where the song, the flirtation, the dance, and the gossip went on, and to which, at a late hour, Mrs. Bartow came, and with her Jessie Graham. Walter accompanied them, for Mr. Graham had asked him to be their escort, and Walter never refused a request from one who, since his residence in the city, had been to him like a father rather than a friend.

Mr. Graham had evinced much surprise when told that Walter would rather some other house should be his home, but Jessie, too, had said that it was better so, and looking into her eyes, which told more tales than she supposed, Mr. Graham saw that Walter was not indifferent to his only child, nor was he displeased that it was so, and when Walter came to the city he found to his surprise that he was not to be the clerk, but the junior partner of his friend, who treated him with a respect and thoughtful kindness which puzzled him greatly. Especially was he astonished when Mr. Graham, as he

often did, asked him to go with Jessie to the places where he could not accompany her.

"He wishes to show me," he thought, "that after what I said to Mrs. Bartow, he dare trust his daughter with me as if I were her brother," and Walter felt more determined than ever not to betray the trust, but to treat Jessie as a friend and nothing more.

So he called occasionally at the house, where he often found William Bellenger, and compelled himself to listen in silence to the flattering speeches his cousin made to Jessie, who, a good deal piqued at Walter's apparent coldness, received them far more complacently than she would otherwise have done, and so the gulf widened between them, while in the heart of each there was a restless pain, which neither the gay world in which Jessie lived, nor yet the busy one where Walter passed his days, could dissipate. He had absented himself from Jessie's "come-out party," and for this offence the young lady had been sorely indignant.

"She wanted Charlotte Reeves and all the girls to see him, and then to be treated that way was perfectly horrid," and the beautiful belle pouted many a day over the young man's obstinacy.

But Charlotte Reeves did see him at last, and when she learned that he was Mr. Graham's partner, and much esteemed by that gentleman, she partially took him up as a card to be played whenever she wished to annoy William Bellenger, who kept an eye on her in case he should lose Jessie. The relationship between the two was not known, for Walter had no desire to speak of it,

and as William vainly fancied it might reflect discredit on himself, he, too, kept silent on the subject, while Mrs. Bartow, having received instructions both from Jessie and her father, never hinted to her bosom friend and deadliest enemy, Mrs. Reeves, that the young Marshall whom Charlotte was patronizing, and who was noticed by all for his gentlemanly bearing and handsome face, was in any way connected with the Bellenger disgrace.

After her return from Saratoga, Mrs. Reeves had been sick for several months, and at the time of the party was still an invalid, and claimed the privilege of sitting during the evening. Consequently Mrs. Bartow had not yet found a favorable opportunity for wounding her as she intended doing, and when, on the evening of the party, she entered the crowded rooms, she made her way to the sofa, and greeting the lady with her blindest words, told her how delighted she was to see her in society again, how much she had been missed, and all the other compliments which meant worse than nothing. Then taking a mental inventory of the different articles which made up her dear friend's dress and comparing them with her own, she set her costly fan in motion and watched to see which received the more attention,—Charlotte Reeves or Jessie. The latter certainly looked the best, as, arm in arm with Walter, she walked through the parlors, oblivious to all else in her delight at seeing him appear so much like himself as he did to-night.

"It's such a pity he's poor," said Mrs. Reeves, as he was passing. "Do you know I think him by far the most distinguished looking man in the room, always excepting,

of course, Mr. Bellenger," and she nodded apologetically to a little pale-faced lady sitting beside her on the sofa.

This lady she had not seen fit to introduce to her dear friend, who had scanned her a moment with her glass, and then pronounced her "somebody." Twice Walter and Jessie passed, stopping the second time, while the latter received from her grandmother the whispered injunction "not to walk with him until everybody talked."

"Pshaw!" was Jessie's answer, while Mrs. Reeves slyly congratulated Mr. Marshall on his good luck in having the belle of the evening so much to himself, and as they stood there thus the face of the little silent lady flashed with a sudden light, and touching Mrs. Reeves when they were gone, she said:

"Who' was that young man? You called him Marshall, didn't you?"

"Yes, Walter Marshall, and he is Mr. Graham's partner. You know of Mr. Graham,—people call him a millionaire, but my son says he don't believe it."

This last was lost upon the little lady, who cared nothing for Mr. Graham, and who continued:

"Where did he come from?"

"Really, I don't know. Perhaps Mrs. Bartow can enlighten you," and Mrs. Reeves went through with a form of introduction, speaking the stranger's name so low, that in the surrounding hum it was entirely lost on Mrs. Bartow, who bowed, and briefly stated that Walter was from Deerwood, Mass.

The lady's hands worked nervously together, and when



Walter again drew near, the white, thin face looked wistfully after him, while the lips moved as if they would call him back. He was disengaged at last. Jessie had another gallant in the person of William Bellenger, Mrs. Bartow's fan moved faster than before, and Mrs. Reeves was about to make some remark to her companion, when the latter rose, and crossing over to where Walter stood, said to him in a low, pleasant voice:

"Excuse me, Mr. Marshall, but would you object to walking with me,—an old lady?"

Walter started, and looking earnestly into the dark eyes, which were full of tears, offered her his arm, and the two were soon lost amid the gay throng.

"Who is she? I didn't understand the name," Mrs. Bartow asked, her lip dropping suddenly, as Mrs. Reeves replied:

"Why, that's the honorable Mrs. Bellenger, returned from a ten years' residence abroad."

"Mrs. Bellenger," Mrs. Bartow repeated. "Is it possible? I have always had a great desire to make her acquaintance. How plain, and yet how elegantly she dresses."

"She is not the woman she used to be," returned Mrs. Reeves. "She is very much changed, and they say that during the last year of her sojourn in London she spent her time in distributing tracts among the poor, and all that sort of thing. I wonder what she wants of Mr. Marshall. Wasn't it queer the way she introduced herself to him?"

"Very," Mrs. Bartow said; but she thought, "not

strange at all," and she was half tempted to tell her friend the relationship existing between the two.

This she would perhaps have done had not Mrs. Reeves at that moment directed her attention to William and Jessie, saying of the former that he seemed very unhappy.

"The fact is," she whispered, confidentially, "he never appears at ease unless he is somewhere near Charlotte. I think he monopolizes her altogether too much. I tell her so too. But she only laughs, and says he don't go with her any more than with Jessie Graham, though everybody knows he does. He likes Jessie, of course, but Charlotte is his first choice," and the old lady glanced complacently toward the spot where her sprightly granddaughter stood surrounded by a knot of admirers, each of whom had an eye to her father's coffers as well as to herself.

"The wretch!" thought Mrs. Bartow. "Just as though William preferred that great, long-necked thing to Jessie; but I'll be even with her yet. I'll be revenged when Mrs. Bellenger comes back," and the fan moved rapidly as Mrs. Bartow thought how crest-fallen her dear friend would be when she said what she meant to say to her.

Meantime Mrs. Bellenger had led Walter to a little ante-room where they would be comparatively free from observation, and sitting down upon an ottoman, she bade him, too, be seated. He complied with her request, and then waited for her to speak, wondering much who she was, and why she had sought this interview with him.

As Mrs. Reeves had said, Mrs. Bellenger had for the last ten years resided in different parts of Europe. She had gone there with her husband and only surviving daughter, both of whom she had buried, one among the Grampian Hills, and the other upon the banks of the blue Rhine. Her youngest son, who was still unmarried, had joined her there, but had become dissipated, and eighteen months before her return to America she had laid him in a drunkard's grave. With a breaking heart she returned to her lonely home in London, dating from that hour the commencement of another and better life, and now there was not in the whole world an humbler or more consistent Christian than the once haughty Mrs. Bellenger. Many and many a time, when away over the sea, had her thoughts gone back to her youngest born, the gentle brown-eyed Ellen, whom she had disowned because the man she chose was poor, and in bitterness of heart she had cried :

"Oh, that I had her with me now !"

Then, as she remembered the helpless infant which she had once held for a brief moment upon her lap, her heart yearned toward him with all a mother's love, and she said to herself :

"I will find the boy, and it may be he will comfort my old age."

On her return to Boston she went to the house of William's father, but everything there was cold and ostentatious. They greeted her warmly, it is true, and paid her marked attention, but she suspected they did it for the money she had in her possession, for the family was

extravagant and deeply involved in debt. Once she asked if they knew anything of Ellen's child, and her son replied that he believed he was a clerk of some kind in New York, but none of the family had ever seen him save Will, who had met him once or twice, and who spoke of him as having a little of the Bellenger look and bearing.

Then she came to New York and found her grandson Will, who was less her favorite than ever when she heard how sneeringly he spoke of Walter. From his remarks, she did not expect to meet the latter at the party, but she would find him next day, she said, and when he entered the room she was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to notice him, but when he passed her with Jessie she started, for there was in his face a look like her dead daughter.

"Can it be that handsome young man is Ellen's child?" she said, and she waited anxiously till he appeared again.

He stopped before her then, and with a beating heart she listened to what they called him, and then asked who he was.

"It is my boy,—it is," she murmured between her quivering lips, and as soon as she saw that he was free she joined him, as we have seen, and led him to another room.

For a moment she hesitated, as if uncertain what to say, then, as they were left alone, she began:

"My conduct may seem strange to you, but I cannot help it. Twenty-five years ago a sweet girlish voice called me mother, and the face of her who called me thus

was much like yours, young man. She left me one summer morning, and our house was like a tomb without her; but she never came back again, and when I saw her next she lay in her coffin. She was too young to be lying there, for she was scarcely twenty. She died with the shadow of my anger resting on her heart, for when I heard she had married one whom the world said was not her equal, I cast her off, I said she was not mine, and from that day to this the worm of remorse has been gnawing at my heart, for I hear continually the dying message they said she left for me: 'Tell mother to love my baby for the sake of the love she once bore me.' I didn't do it. I steeled my proud heart even against the little boy. But I'm yearning for him now,—yearning for that child to hold up my feeble hands,—to guide my trembling feet and smooth my pathway down into the valley which I must tread ere long."

She paused, and covering her face, wept aloud. Glancing hurriedly around, Walter saw that no one was very near, and going up to her, he wound his arm round her, and whispered in her ear:

"My mother's mother,—my grandmother,—I never expected this from you."

Before Mrs. Bellenger could reply, footsteps were heard approaching, and William appeared with Jessie. He had told her of his grandmother's unexpected arrival that morning, and when she expressed a wish to see her, he started in quest of her at once. He knew that he was not a favorite with her, but she surely would like Jessie, and that might make her more lenient toward himself;

so he had sought for her everywhere, learning at last from Mrs. Bartow that she had gone off with Walter.

"Upon my word," he thought, "he has commenced his operations soon," and a sudden fear came over him lest Walter should be preferred to himself by the rich old lady.

And this suspicion was not in the least diminished by the position of the parties when he came suddenly upon them.

"He is playing his cards well," he said, involuntarily, while Jessie was conscious of a feeling of pleasure at seeing Walter thus acknowledged by his grandmother.

With a tolerably good grace, Will introduced his companion, his spirits rising when he saw how pleasantly and kindly his grandmother received them both. Once, as they stood together talking, Mrs. Bellenger spoke of Deerwood, where her daughter was buried, and instantly over William's face there flitted the same uneasy look which Mrs. Reeves had seen and imputed to his desire to be with Charlotte.

"Have you heard from Miss Howland recently?" he asked Walter, who replied :

"I heard some three weeks since, and she was then about as usual. She is always feeble in the winter, though I believe they think her worse this season than she has ever been before."

William thought of a letter received a few days before, the contents of which had written the look upon his face which Mrs. Reeves had noticed, and had prompted him to ask the question he did.

"Poor Ellen!" sighed Jessie, "I fear she's not long for this world."

"What did you call her?" Mrs. Bellenger asked, and Walter replied:

"Ellen, my mother's namesake, and my cousin."

"I shall see her," returned the lady, "for I am going to Deerwood by-and-by."

William was going, too, but he would rather not meet his grandmother there, and he said to her, indifferently, as it were:

"When will you go?"

"In two or three weeks," she answered, and satisfied that she would not then interfere with him, he offered Jessie his arm a second time and walked away, hearing little of what was passing around him, and caring less, for the words "Oh, William, I am surely dying! Won't you come?" rang in his ears like a funeral knell.

For a long time Mrs. Bellenger talked with Walter, asking him at last of his father, and if any news had been heard of him.

"It does not matter," she said, when he replied in the negative. "I have outlived all that foolish pride, and love you just the same."

Her words were sweet and soothing to Walter, and he did not care much now even if William did keep Jessie continually at his side, walking frequently past the door where he could see them. Once, as they passed, Mrs. Bellenger remarked:

"Miss Graham is a beautiful young woman. Is she engaged to William?"



"No, no! oh, no!" and in the voice Mrs. Bellenger learned all she wished to know.

"Pardon me," she continued, taking Walter's hand, "pardon the liberty, but you love Jessie Graham," and her mild eyes look gently into his.

"Hopelessly," he answered, and his grandmother rejoined:

"Not hopelessly, my child; for as one woman can read another, so I saw upon her face that which told me she cared only for you. Be patient and wait, and with another pleasant smile she arose, saying to him, laughingly: "I am going to acknowledge you now. You say they do not know that my blood is flowing in your veins," and she passed again into the crowd, who fell back at her approach, for by this time everybody knew who she was, and numerous were the surmises as to what kept her so long with young Marshall.

The matter was soon explained, for she only needed to say to those about her, "This is my grandson,—my daughter Ellen's child," for the news to spread rapidly, reaching at last to Mrs. Reeves, still seated on her throne. Greatly she wondered how it could be, and why William had not told her before; then, as she remembered her investigations with regard to the Bellengers, she added what was wanting to complete the tale, leaving out the robbery, and merely saying that Mr. Marshall's poverty had been the chief objection to his marriage with Miss Ellen Bellenger. This she did because she knew that with his grandmother for a prop, Walter could not be trampled down, and she meant to be the first to hold him up.

In the midst of a group of ladies, to whom she was enumerating Jessie's many virtues, Mrs. Bartow heard the news, and answered very carelessly :

"Why, I knew that long ago. Mr. Marshall is a fine young man," and as she spoke, she wondered if he would share with William in his grandmother's property.

"Even if he does," she thought, "William will have the most, for his father is very wealthy,—then there is the name of Bellenger, which is something," and having thus balanced the two, and found the heavier weight in William's favor, she looked after him, as he led Jessie away to the dancing-room, with a most benignant expression, particularly as she saw that Mrs. Reeves was looking at him too.

"I wonder what she thinks now about his wishing to be with Charlotte?" she thought, and she longed for the moment when she could pay the lady for her ill-natured remarks.

By this time Mrs. Bellenger had returned to her seat by Mrs. Reeves, and thinking this a favorable opportunity, Mrs. Bartow took her stand near them and began :

"By the way, Mrs. Reeves, did you ever know any one in Leicester, Massachusetts, by the name of Marshall—Debby Marshall, I mean?"

Mrs. Reeves started, with a look upon her face as if that which she had long feared and greatly dreaded had come upon her at last. Then, resuming her composure, she repeated the name :

"Debby Marshall?—Debby Marshall? I certainly do not number her among my acquaintances."

"I knew it must be a mistake," returned Mrs. Bartow, "particularly as she was malicious enough to say that your father was a tin peddler."

"A tin peddler!" gasped Mrs. Reeves, making a furious attack upon her smelling salts. "I believe I'm going to faint. The idea! It's perfectly preposterous! Where is this mischief-maker?" and the black eyes flashed round the room, as if in search of the offending Aunt Debby.

"Pray don't distress yourself," said the delighted Mrs. Bartow. "Of course it isn't true, and if it were, it's safe with me. I met this woman last summer in Deerwood, when I went down for Jessie. I chanced to mention your name, as I frequently do when away from you, and this Debby, who is an old maid, seventy at least, said she used to know a factory girl,—Charlotte Ann Gregory, of about her age, who married a man by the name of Reeves, a storekeeper, she called him. It's a remarkable coincidence, isn't it, that there should be two Charlotte Ann Gregorys, with sister Lizzies, and that both should marry merchants of the same name and come to New York. But nothing is strange now-a-days, so don't let it worry you. This old Debby is famous for knowing everybody's history."

Like a drowning man, Mrs. Reeves caught at this last remark. If Debby Marshall knew everybody's history, she of course knew Mrs. Bartow's, and the disconcerted lady hastened to ask:

"Where did you say she lived?"

"In Deerwood, with her brother, Deacon Amos Marshall,

about half a mile from the village," returned the unsuspecting Mrs. Bartow.

Silently Mrs. Reeves wrote the information upon the tablets of her memory, and then, in a low voice of entreaty, said to her friend :

" You know it is all false, as well as you know that there are, in this city, envious people who would delight in just such scandal, and I trust you will not repeat it."

" Certainly,—certainly," said Mrs. Bartow, but whether the certainly were affirmative or negative was doubtful.

Mrs. Reeves accepted the latter, and then turned to Mrs. Bellenger to remove from her mind any unpleasant impression she might have received. This, however, was wholly unnecessary, for Mrs. Bellenger was too much absorbed in her own reflections to hear what Mrs. Bartow had been saying, and to Mrs. Reeves' remark, " I trust you do not credit the ridiculous story," she answered :

" What story ? I heard nothing."

Thus relieved in that quarter, Mrs. Reeves became rather more composed, and for the remainder of the evening addressed Mrs. Bartow as " my dear," complimenting her once or twice upon her youthful looks, and saying several flattering things of Jessie.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## A RETROSPECT.

THE flowers in the garden and the leaves on the trees were withered and dead. The luxuriant hop-vine, which grew about the farm-house door, had yielded its bountiful store, and loosened from its summer fastening trailed upon the ground. The cows no longer fed among the hills, the winter stores had been gathered in, there was a thin coating of ice upon the pond, and a dark, cold mist upon the mountain. There was a pallid hue upon Ellen's cheek, and a look of strange unrest in her eyes as day after day, all through the autumn time, she watched for the coming of one who had said, "I will be with you when the forest casts its leaf."

The time appointed had come, and the brown leaves were "heaped in the hollow of the wood" or tossed by the autumn wind, and the pain in Ellen's heart grew heavier to bear, as morning after morning she said :

"He will come to-day," and night after night she wept at his delay.

But there came a day at last, a bright November day, when she saw him in the distance, and with a cry of joy she buried her face in the pillows of the lounge, saying to her mother :

"I am faint and sick."

She lay very white and still, while kind Aunt Debby chafed her clammy hands, and when they said to her, "Mr. Bellenger is here," she simply answered, "Is he?" for she had never told them that she expected him.

He said he was passing through the town, and for old acquaintance sake had stopped over one train, and the unsuspecting family believed it all, and when he said that Ellen stayed too much indoors, that a ride would do her good, they offered no remonstrance, but wrapping her up in warm shawls sent her out with him upon the mountain, where he told her how, through all the dreary months of his absence, one face alone had shown on him, one voice had sounded in his ear, and that the voice which now said to him so mournfully :

"I almost feared you had forgotten me, and it seemed so dreadful after all were gone, Walter, Jessie, and everybody. . Forgive me, William, but when I remembered Jessie's sparkling beauty and knew she was a belle, I feared you would not come."

William Bellenger was conscious of a pang, for he knew how terribly he was deceiving the trusting girl sitting there upon the rock beside him, the color coming and going upon her marble cheek, and a tear dimming the lustre of her eyes. On his way thither he had resolved to rouse her from the dream, to tell her she must forget him, but when he looked upon her unearthly beauty, and saw how she clung to him, he could not do it. So when she spoke of Jessie as one who might rival her, he said:

"Yes, Miss Graham is charming, but believe me, Nellie, I can love but one, and that one you."

The bright round spot deepened on her cheek, and William felt for an instant that had he the means, he would bear the poor invalid away to a sunnier clime, and by his tender care nurse her back to health. But he had not. There were bills on bills which he could not pay. His father, too, was straitened, for old Mr. Bellenger had left his entire fortune by will to his wife, who had refused to sanction the reckless extravagance of her son's family. A rich bride, then, must cancel William's debts, and as Ellen was not rich, he dared not talk to her of marriage, but whispered only of the love he felt for her. And Ellen grew faint and chill listening to this idle mockery, for the November wind blew cold upon the bleak mountain side. It was in vain that William wrapped both shawl and arm around her, hugging her closer to him until her golden hair rested on her bosom. He could not make her warm, and at last he took her home, telling her by the way he would come again ere long and stay with her a week.

"I will explain to your mother then," he said, "and until that time you'd better say nothing of the matter, lest it should reach the ears of my proud family. I would write to you, but that would create surprise. So you'll have to be content with knowing that I do most truly love you."

And Ellen tried to be content, though after he was gone she cried herself to sleep, and for a time forgot her wretchedness. She had taken a severe cold upon the



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mountain, and for many weeks she stayed indoors, thinking through all the long winter evenings of William, and wishing he would come again, or send her some message.

At last, as her desire to see him grew stronger, she resolved to write and bid him come, for she was dying.

"I know that it is so," she wrote. "I see it in the faces of my friends, I hear it in my mother's voice, I feel it in my failing strength. Yes, I am surely dying, won't you come. It is but a little thing for you, and it will do me so much good. Do you really love me, William? I have sometimes feared you didn't as I loved you. I have sometimes thought you might be glad when the grass was growing on my grave, because you then would have no dread lest your proud relatives should know how you paused a moment to look at the frail blossom fading by the wayside. If it is so, William, don't tell it to me now; let me die believing that you really do love me. Come and tell me so once more, let me hear your voice again; then when I am dead, and they go to lay me down in the very spot where you found me sleeping that summer afternoon, you needn't join the mourners, for the world might ask why you were there. But when I'm buried, William, and the candles are lighted in my dear old home, then go alone where Nellie lies. It will make you a better man to pray above my grave, and if you know in your secret heart that you have been deceiving me, God will forgive you then. I am growing tired, William, there's a blur before my eyes and I cannot see. Come quickly, William, do."

The letter Ellen carried to the office herself, for she sometimes rode as far as the village with her grandfather, and thus none of the family knew that it was sent, or guessed why, for many days, her face grew brighter with a joyous expectant look, which Aunt Debby said "came straight from Heaven." The letter reached William just as he was dressing for Charlotte Reeves' party, and tearing open the envelope, he read it with dim eye and quivering lip, for the writer had a stronger hold on his affections than he had at first supposed.

"I will go and see her," he said to himself, "though I can carry her no comfort unless I fabricate some lie. Poor, darling Nellie! It will not be a falsehood to tell that I love her best of all the world, even though I cannot make her my wife. Perhaps she don't expect me to do that," and crushing into his pocket the letter, stained with Nellie's tears and his, he went, as we have seen, to the house of festivity, mingling in the gay scene, and letting no opportunity pass for showing to those around that Jessie Graham was the chosen one, though all the while his thoughts were away in Deerwood, where the dying Nellie waited so anxiously his coming, and whither in a few days he went, taking care to say to Jessie that he was going into the country, and might possibly visit the farm-house before he returned.



## CHAPTER IX.

NELLIE.

THE winter sun was setting, and its fading light fell upon the golden hair and white, beautiful face of Nellie, who lay upon the lounge in the room where Walter's mother died, and which Jessie now called hers. She was weaker than usual, and the hectic spot upon her cheek was larger and brighter, while her eyes shone like diamonds as she looked wistfully in the direction of the village, where the smoke of the New York train was slowly dying away.

"Mother," she said at last, "isn't the omnibus coming over the hill?"

"Yes," Mrs. Howland answered. "Possibly it is Walter, though I did not tell him in my last how weak you are, as you know you bade me not, lest he should be unnecessarily alarmed."

Ellen knew it was not Walter, and the spot on her cheek was almost a blood-red hue when she heard the dear familiar voice, and knew that William had come.

"Mother," she said faintly, "it's Mr. Bellenger, and you must let me see him alone,—all the evening alone;—will you? It's right," she continued, as she met her mother's look of enquiry. "I'll explain it perhaps when he's gone."

In an instant the truth flashed upon Mrs. Howland, bringing with it a feeling of gratified pride that the elegant William Bellenger had condescended to think of her child. She did not know the whole. She could not guess how thoroughly selfish was the man who was deliberately breaking her daughter's heart, or she would not have left them to themselves that long winter evening, saying to her father and Debby, when they questioned the propriety of the proceeding :

"He wants to tell her of Walter and Jessie, I suppose, and the fine times they have in the city."

This satisfied Aunt Debby, but the deacon was not quite at ease, and more than once after finishing his fourth pipe, he started to join them, but was as often kept back by some well-timed remark addressed to him by Mrs. Howland; and so William was left undisturbed while he poured again into Ellen's ear the story of his love, telling her how inexpressibly dear she was to him, and that but for circumstances which he could not control, he would prove his assertion true by making her at once his wife. Then the long eyelashes dropped beneath their weight of tears, for there flitted across Ellen's mind a vague consciousness that if these circumstances existed when he first talked to her of love, he had done very wrong. Still she could not accuse him even in thought, and she hastened to say :

"I don't know as I really ever supposed that you wished me to be your wife; and if I did it don't matter now, for I am going to die; death has a prior claim, and I never can be yours."

He held her hot hand in his,—felt the rapid pulse,—saw the deep color on her cheek,—the unnatural lustre of her eye,—and felt that she told him truly. And thinking that anything which he could say to comfort and please her would be right, he whispered :

“I hope there are many years in store for you. If I should take you to Florida as my wife, do you think you would get well?”

She had said to him that it could not be,—that death would claim her first, but now that he had asked her this, all the energies of life were roused within her, and her whole face said yes, even before the answer dropped from her pale lips.

“Oh, William, dear, are you in earnest? Can I go?” and raising herself up, she wound her arms around his neck so that her head rested on his bosom.

And William held it there, caressing the fair hair, while he battled with all his better nature, and tried to think of some excuse,—some good reason for retracting the proposition which had been received so differently from what he expected. He thought of it at last, and laying his burden gently back upon her pillow, he answered mournfully :

“Forgive me, darling. In my great love for you I spoke inadvertently. I wish I were free to do what my heart dictates, but I am not. Listen, Nellie, and then you shall decide. Perhaps you have never heard that Jessie and I were long ago intended for each other by our parents?”

William's voice trembled as he uttered this falsehood,

but not one half as much as did the young girl on the lounge.

"No," she answered faintly; "Jessie never told me."

"Some girls are not inclined to talk of those they love," said William, and fixing her clear blue eyes on him, Ellen asked:

"Does Jessie love you, William?"

"And suppose she does?" he replied; suppose she had always been taught to look upon me as her future husband? Suppose that even when I first came here there was an understanding that, unless Jessie should prefer some one else, we were to be married when she was eighteen, and suppose that since we have been so much together as we have this winter, Jessie had learned to love me very much, and that my marrying another now would break her heart, what would you have me do? I know you must think it wrong in me to talk of love to you, knowing what I did, but struggle as I would I could not help it. You are my ideal of a wife. I love you better than I do Jessie,—better than I do any one, and you shall decide the matter. I will leave Jessie, offend her father, and incur the lasting displeasure of my own family, if you say so. Think a moment, darling, and then tell me what to do."

Had he held a knife at her heart, and a pistol at her head, bidding her to take her choice between the two, he could scarcely have pained her more. Folding her hands together, she lay so still that it seemed almost like the stillness of death, and William once bent down to see if she were sleeping. But the large blue eyes turned toward him, and a faint whisper met his ear:

"Don't disturb me, I am thinking," and as she thought the cold perspiration stood in the palms of her hands and about her mouth, for it was like tearing out her very life, deciding to give William up, and bidding him marry another, even though she knew she could never be his wife.

Jessie Graham was very dear to the poor invalid, as the first and almost only girl friend she had ever known. Jessie had been kind to her, while Mr. Graham had been most kind to them all. Jessie would make William a far more suitable wife than she could. His proud relatives would scoff at her, and perhaps if she should live and marry him he might be sorry that he did not take the more brilliant Jessie. But was there any probability that she could live? She wished she knew, and she said to William:

"Do people always get well if they go to Florida?"

"Sometimes, darling, if the disease is not too far advanced," was the answer, and Ellen went back to her reflections.

Her disease was too far advanced, she feared, and if she could not live, why should she wish to trammel William for so short a time, even if there were no Jessie, and would it not be better to give him up at once? Yes, it would, she said, and just as William began a second time to think she had fallen away to sleep she beckoned him to come near, and in a voice which sounded like the wail of a broken heart, she whispered:

"I have decided, William. You must marry Jessie,—but not till I am dead. You'll love poor me till then,



won't you?" and burying her face in his bosom, she sobbed bitterly. He kissed her tears away; he told her he would not marry Jessie, that she alone should be his wife; and when she answered that it must not be, that at the longest she could live but a short time, he felt in his villainous, selfish heart that he was glad she was so sensible. He had told her no lie, he thought. He had merely supposed a case, and she, taking it for granted, had deliberately given him up. He could not help himself, for had she not virtually refused him?

By such arguments as these did the wicked man seek to quiet his guilty conscience, but when he saw how much it had cost the young girl to say what she had said, he was half tempted to undeceive her, to tell her it was all false, that story of himself and Jessie,—but gold was dearer to him than aught else on earth, and so he did not do it. He merely told her that so long as she lived he should love her the best, but advised her not to talk with Jessie on the subject, as it would only make them both unhappy.

"You may tell your mother that I love you, but I would say nothing to Jessie, who might not like to have the matter talked about, as it is not positively settled, yet, at least not enough to proclaim it to the world."

Like a submissive child, Ellen promised compliance with all his wishes, and as the deacon by this time had declared "there was no sense in them two staying in there any longer," he appeared in the door, and thus put an end to the conversation.

All the next day William stayed, improving every

opportunity to whisper to Ellen of his love, but the words were almost meaningless to her now. She knew that she loved him; she believed that he loved her, but there was a barrier between them, and when at night he left her, she was so strangely calm that he felt a pang lest he might have lost a little of her love, which, in spite of his selfishness, was very dear to him. After he was gone Ellen told her mother of their mutual love, which never could be consummated, because she must die; but she said nothing of Jessie, and the deluded woman, gazing on her beautiful daughter, prayed that she might live, and so one day grace the halls of the proud Bellengers. After this there often came to the farm-house dainty luxuries for the invalid, and though there was no name, Ellen knew who sent them, and smiling into her mother's face, would say:

"Isn't he good to me?"

At last the stormy March had come, and one night a lady stood at the farm-house door, asking if Deacon Marshall lived there.

"I have no claim upon your hospitality," she said, "but a mother has a right to visit her daughter's grave and the home where her daughter died."

It was Mrs. Bellenger, but so changed from the haughty woman who years ago had been there, that the family could scarcely believe it was the same. It is true they had heard from Walter of his grandmother's kindness, and how the effect of that kindness was already beginning to be apparent in the treatment he received from those who before had scarcely noticed him, but they could not

understand it until they saw the lady in their midst, affable and friendly to them all, but especially to poor sick Nellie, to whom she attached herself at once. Very rapidly each grew to liking the other. Mrs. Bellenger, because the gentle invalid bore her daughter's name; and Nellie, because the lady was William's grandmother, and sometimes spoke of him. For many days Mrs. Bellenger lingered, for there was something very soothing in the quiet of the farm-house, and very attractive about the sick girl, who once as they sat together alone, opened her whole heart and told the story of her love.

"It surely is not wrong for me to confide in you," she said, "and I must talk of it to somebody."

Mrs. Bellenger had heretofore distrusted William, but the fact that he had won the love of so pure a being as Ellen Howland changed her feeling toward him, and when the latter said, "He spoke of taking me to Florida," she thought at once that her money should pay the bills, and that she too would go and help her grandson nurse the beautiful young girl back to life and strength. This last she said to Ellen, who answered mournfully:

"It cannot be, for I have given him up to Jessie, whose claim was better than mine," and then she repeated all that William had said to her.

"It doesn't matter," she continued. "I can't live very long, and Jessie has been so kind to me that I want to give her something, and William is the most precious thing I have.

"It hurt me to give him up. But it is best, even if there were no Jessie Graham. His parents are not like

you ; they might teach him in time to despise me, and I'd rather die now."

Mrs. Bellenger turned away to hide her tears, and could William have seen what was in her heart,—could he have known how easily Ellen's wasted hand could unlock her coffers and gave him the money he craved, the proud house of Bellenger would have mourned over a second *mesalliance*.

For nearly two weeks Mrs. Bellenger remained in Deerwood, and then, promising to come again ere long, returned to the city, where rumor was already busy with the marriage which the world said was soon to take place between William Bellenger and the beautiful Miss Graham.



## CHAPTER X.

A DISCLOSURE.

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MUCH surprise was expressed, and a good deal of interest manifested, when it was known that the handsome house up-town which had recently been bought by a stranger, it was said, and elegantly furnished, was the property of Mrs. Bellenger, who, not long after her return from Deerwood, took possession of it, and made it also the home of Walter Marshall. The latter was now courted and admired as a most "delightful young man," and probably the principal heir of the rich old lady, who did not hesitate to show how greatly she preferred him to her other grandson, William. Even Mrs. Reeves was especially gracious to him now, saying she believed him quite as good a match as Mr. Bellenger, who was welcome to Jessie Graham if he wanted her. And it would seem that he did, for almost every evening found him at her side, while Walter frequently met them in the street, or heard of them at various places of amusement.

Still Jessie was very kind to him whenever he called upon her, unless William chanced to be present, and then she seemed to take delight in annoying him, by devoting herself almost entirely to one whom he at last believed was really his rival. This opinion he expressed one day

to his grandmother, who had come to the same conclusion, and who as gently as possible repeated to him all that Ellen had told her. It was the first intimation Walter had received that William Bellenger had pretended to care for his cousin, and it affected him deeply.

"The wretch!" he exclaimed. "He won Ellen's love only to cast it from him at his will, for he never thought of making her his wife."

Then, as his own gloomy future arose before him, he groaned aloud, for he never knew before how dear Jessie was to him.

"It may not be so," his grandmother said, laying her hand upon his head. "I cannot quite think Jessie would prefer him to you, and she has known you always, too. Suppose you talk with her upon the subject. It will not make the matter worse."

"Grandmother," said Walter, "I have promised never to speak of love to Jessie Graham until I am free from the taint my father's misfortune has fastened upon my name, and as there is no hope that this will ever be, I must live on and see her given to another. Were my rival anybody but William, I could bear it better, for I want Jessie to be happy, and I believe him to be—a villain, and I would far rather that Jessie would die than be his bride."

Walter was very much excited, and as the atmosphere of the room seemed oppressive, he seized his hat and rushed out into the street, meeting by the way William and Jessie. They were walking very slowly, and apparently so absorbed with themselves, that neither observed

him till just as he was passing, when Jessie looked up and called after him :

“Are you never coming to see me again?”

“I don’t know,—perhaps not,” was the cool answer, and Walter hastened on, while William, who never let an opportunity pass for a sly insinuation against his cousin, asked Jessie if she had not observed how consequential Walter had grown since his grandmother took him up and pushed him into society. “Everybody is laughing about it,” said he, “but that is the way with people of his class. They cannot bear prosperity.”

“I think Walter has too much good sense,” Jessie replied, “to be lifted up by the attentions of those who used to slight him, but who notice him now just because Mrs. Bellenger likes him. There’s Mrs. Reeves, for instance,—it’s perfectly sickening to hear her talk about ‘dear Mr. Marshall,’ when she used to speak of him as ‘that poor young man in Mr. Graham’s employ.’ Charlotte always liked him.”

This last was not very agreeable to Will, for in case he failed to secure Jessie, Charlotte was his next choice.

Money he must have, and soon too, for there was a heavy burden on his mind, and unless that burden was lifted disgrace was sure to follow. Twice recently he had written to his father for money and received the same answer.

“I have nothing for you ; go to your grandmother, who has plenty.”

Once he had asked Mrs. Bellenger for a hundred dollars ; but she had said that “a young man in perfect health



ought to have some occupation, and as he had none he had no right to live as expensively as he did."

Several times he had borrowed of Walter, making an excuse that he had forgotten his purse, or "that the old man's remittances had not come," but never remembering to pay or mention it again. In this state of affairs it was quite natural that he should be looking about for something to ease his mind and fill his pocket at the same time. A rich wife could do this, and as Jessie and Charlotte both were rich, one of them must come to the rescue. Jessie's remark about Charlotte disturbed him, and as he had not of late paid her much attention, he resolved to call upon her as soon as he had seen Jessie to her own door.

Meanwhile Walter had gone to his office, where he found upon the desk a letter in his grandfather's handwriting, and hastily breaking the seal, he read, that he must come quickly if he would see his cousin alive. The letter inclosed a note for Jessie, and Walter was requested to give it to her so that she might come with him.

"Poor Ellen talks of Jessie and Mrs. Bellenger all the time," the deacon wrote, "and perhaps your grandmother would not mind coming too. She seemed to take kindly to the child."

Not a word was said of William, for Ellen would not allow her mother to send for him.

"It would only make him feel badly," she said, "and I would save him from unnecessary pain." So she hushed her longing to see him again and asked only for Jessie.

"I will go to-morrow morning," Walter thought, and as

Mr. Graham was absent for a day or two he was thinking of taking the note to Jessie himself, when William came suddenly upon him.

"Well, old fellow," said he, "what's up now? Your face is long as a gravestone."

"Ellen is dying," returned Walter, "and they have sent for me."

"Ellen dying!" and the man, who a moment before had spoken so jeeringly, staggered into a chair as if smitten by a heavy blow.

"I did not suppose he cared so much for her," thought Walter, and in a kinder tone he told what he knew, and passing William the note intended for Jessie, he bade him take it to her that night, and tell her to meet him at the depot in the morning. "And William," said Walter, fixing his eye earnestly upon his cousin, what message shall I take to Ellen for you? or will you go too?

For a moment William hesitated, while his better nature battled with his worse, urging him to give up the game at which he was playing, and comfort the dying girl he had so cruelly deceived, and acknowledge to the world how dear she was to him; then, as another frightful thought intruded itself upon him, he murmured, "I can't, I can't," and with that resolution he sealed his future destiny. "No, I cannot go," he said, and thrusting the note into his pocket went out into the open air, a harder man, if possible than he had been before. "Jessie must not go to Deerwood if I can prevent it," he thought to himself. "Nellie may tell her all, and that would be fatal to my plans."

So he resolved not to call at Mr. Graham's that night, and in case an explanation should afterward be necessary, he would say that he had sent the note by a boy, who, of course, had neglected to deliver it.

Accordingly the next morning Walter and his grandmother waited impatiently for Jessie at the depot, and then, when they found she was not coming, took their seats in the cars with heavy hearts, for both knew how terrible would be the disappointment to Ellen, who loved Jessie Graham better almost than herself.

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"Where's Jessie? Didn't I hear her voice in the other room?" the sick girl asked, when, one after the other, Mrs. Bellenger and Walter bent over her pillow and kissed her wasted face.

"She isn't here," said Walter, and the color faded from Ellen's face as she replied:

"Isn't here? Where is she, Walter?"

He answered that he did not see her himself, but had sent the message by William, and at the mention of his name the blood came surging back to the pallid cheeks.

"William would carry the note, I know," she said, "and why does she stay away when I want so much to see her before I die?" And turning her face to the wall, she wept silently over her friend's apparent neglect.

"Walter," said Mrs. Bellenger, drawing him aside, "it may be possible there is some mistake, and Jessie does not know. Suppose you telegraph to her father and be sure."

Walter immediately acted upon this suggestion, and that evening as Jessie sat listlessly drumming her piano, wondering why Walter seemed so changed, and wishing somebody would come, she received the telegram, and with feverish impatience waited for the morning, when she set off for Deerwood, where she was hailed with rapture by Ellen, who could now only whisper her delight and press the hands of her early friend.

"Why didn't you come with Walter?" she asked, and Jessie replied:

"How could I, when I knew nothing of his coming?"

"Didn't William give you a note?" asked Walter, who was standing near, and upon Jessie's replying that she had neither seen nor heard from William, a sudden suspicion crossed his mind that the message had purposely been withheld.

No such thought, however, intruded itself upon Ellen; the neglect was not intentional, she was sure; and in her joy at having Jessie with her at last, she forgot her earlier disappointment. Earnestly and lovingly she looked up into Jessie's bright, glowing face, and, pushing back her short black curls, whispered:

"Darling Jessie, I am glad you are so beautiful, so good."

And Jessie, listening to these oft-repeated words, did not dream of the pure, unselfish love which prompted them.

If Jessie were beautiful and good, she would make the life of William Bellenger happier than if she were otherwise; and this was all that Ellen asked or wished.

Hidden away in a little rosewood box, which Jessie had given her, was a blurred and blotted letter, which she had written at intervals, as her failing strength would permit. It was her farewell to William, and she would trust it to no messenger but Jessie.

"Tell them all to go out," she said, as the shadows stretched farther and farther across the floor, and she knew it was growing late. "Tell them to leave us together once more, just as we used to be."

Her request was granted, and then laying her hand on her pillow, she said:

"Lie down beside me, Jessie, and put your arms around my neck while I tell you how I love you. It wasn't my way to talk much, Jessie, and when you used to say so often that I was very dear to you, I only kissed you back, and did not tell you how full my heart was of love. Dear Jessie, don't cry. What makes you? Are you sorry I am going to die?"

A passionate hug was Jessie's answer, and Ellen continued:

"It's right, darling, that I should go, for neither of us could be quite happy in knowing that another shared the love we coveted for ourselves. Forgive me, Jessie, I never meant to interfere, and when I'm dead, you won't let it cast a shadow between you that he loved me a little, too."

"I do not understand you," said Jessie, "I love nobody but father,—no man, I mean."

"Oh, Jessie, don't profess to be ignorant of my meaning," said Ellen. "It may be wrong for me to speak of it,

but at the very last, I cannot forbear telling you how willingly I gave William up to you."

"*William!*" Jessie exclaimed. "I never loved William Bellenger,—never *could* love him. What do you mean?"

There was no color in Ellen's face, and she trembled in every limb, as she answered, faintly:

"You wouldn't tell me a lie when I am dying?"

"No, darling, no," and passing her arm around the sick girl, Jessie raised her up, and continued, "explain to me, will you? for I do not comprehend."

Then as briefly as possible Nellie told the story of her love, and how William had said that Jessie stood between them.

"If it is not so," she gasped, "if he has deceived me, don't tell me. I could not endure losing faith in him. Don't, don't," she continued, entreatingly, as Jessie cried, indignantly:

"It is false,—false as his own black heart! There is no understanding between our parents. I never thought of loving him. I hate him now, the monster. And you are dying for me, Nellie, but he killed you, the wretch!"

Jessie paused, for there was something in Nellie's face which awed her into silence. It was as white as ashes, and Jessie never forgot its grieved, heart-broken expression, or the spasmodic quivering of the lips, which uttered no complaint against the perfidious man, but whispered faintly:

"Bring me my little box, and bring the candle, too."

Both were brought, and taking out the letter so deeply freighted with her love, the sick girl held it in the blaze,

watching it as it blackened and charred, and dropped upon the floor.

"With that I burned up my very heart," she said, and a cold smile curled her lips. "The pain is over now. I do not feel it any more."

Then, taking a pencil and a tiny sheet of note paper from the box, she wrote :

"Heaven forgive you, William. Pray for pardon at my grave. You have much need to pray."

Pausing it to Jessie, she said:

"Give this to William when I am dead ; and now draw the covering closer over me, for I am growing cold and sleepy."

Jessie folded the blanket about her shoulders and chest, and then sat down beside her, while the family, hearing no sound, stole softly across the threshold into the room where the May moonshine lay ; where the candle burned dimly on the table, and where the light of a young life flickered and faded with each tick of the tall old clock, which in the kitchen without could be distinctly heard measuring off the time.

Fainter and fainter, dimmer and dimmer, grew the light, until at last, as the swinging pendulum beat the hour of midnight, it went out forever, and the moonbeams fell on the golden hair and white face of the beautiful dead.





## CHAPTER XI.

## THE NIGHT AFTER THE BURIAL.

DOWN the lane, over the rustic bridge, beneath the shadow of the tasseled pines, and up the grassy hillside, where the headstones of the dead gleamed in the sunlight, the long procession wended its way, and the fair May blossoms were upturned, and the moist earth thrown out to make room for the fair sleeper, thus early gone to rest.

Then back again, down the grassy hillside, under the tasseled pines, and up the winding lane the mourners came, and all the afternoon the villagers talked of the beautiful girl,—but in the home she had left so desolate, her name was not once mentioned. They could not speak of her yet, and so the mother sat in her lonely room, rocking to and fro, just as she used to do when there was pillowed on her breast the golden head, now lying across the fields, where the dim eyes of the deacon wandered often, as the old man whispered to himself,

“One grave more, and one chair less. Our store grows fast in Heaven.”

For once Aunt Debby forgot to knit, and the kitten rolled the ball at pleasure, pausing sometimes in her play, and looking up in Jessie's face, as if to ask her the reason

of its unwonted sadness, and why the hug and squeeze had been so long omitted.

To Walter, Ellen had been like a sister, and he went away to weep alone, while Mrs. Bellenger, not wishing to intrude on any one, withdrew to the quiet garden, and so the dreary afternoon went by, and when the sun was set and the moon was shining on the floor of the little portico the family assembled there, and drawing a little stool to the deacon's side, Jessie laid her bright head on his knee.

The moonlight fell softly on her upturned face, heightening its dark, rich beauty, and Walter was gazing admiringly upon her, when a sound in the distance caught his ear, and arrested the attention of all.

It was the sound of a horse's feet, and as the sharp hoofs struck the earth with a rapidity which told how swiftly the rider came, Jessie's heart beat faster with the feeling that she knew who the rider was. He passed them with averted face, and they heard the clatter of the iron shoes, as the steed dashed down the lane, over the rustic bridge, and up the grassy hillside.

Jessie had not told the family the story which broke poor Nellie's heart, for she would not inflict an unnecessary pang upon the mother, or the grandfather, but she wanted Walter to know it, and as the sound of the horse's feet died away in the distance, she said to him:

"Will you walk with me, Walter? It is so light and pleasant."

It seemed a strange request to him, but he complied with it, and as if by mutual consent, the two went

together, toward the grave, whither another had preceded them.

In the city William had heard of the telegram sent to Jessie, and with a feeling of restless impatience, he at last took the cars, as far as the town adjoining Deerwood, where he stopped and heard of Ellen's death. He heard, too, that she was buried that very afternoon, and his pulses quickened with a painful throb, as he heard the landlord's daughter, who had attended the funeral, telling her mother how beautiful the young girl was, all covered with flowers, and how Miss Graham from New York cried when she bent over the coffin.

He would see her grave, he said, he would kiss the earth which covered her, and so when the "candle was lighted in her dear old home," he came, a weary, wretched man, and stood by the little mound. He had almost felt that he should find her there, just as she was that August afternoon, when she lay sleeping with the withered roses drooping on her face.

She had told him of this hour, and bidden him pray when he stood so near to her, but he could not, and he only murmured through his tears:

"Poor Nellie. She deserved a better fate. I wish I had never crossed her path."

There were voices in the distance, and not caring to be found there, he knelt by the pile of earth, and burying his face in the dust, said aloud:

"I wish that I were dead and happy as you are, little Snow Drop," then leaving the inclosure, he mounted his horse, and rode rapidly off, just as Walter and Jessie came up on the opposite side.

"That was William Bellenger," Jessie cried. "I thought so when he passed the house, and I wanted so much to see him here by Ellen's grave."

"William Bellenger," Walter repeated. "Do you know why he was here?"

"Yes, I do," Jessie answered, "and I wanted to reproach him with it. Walter, William Bellenger is a villain!"

"Sit down with me," she continued "here, beside your mother's grave, and Nellie's, and listen while I repeat to you what Nellie told me just before she died."

He obeyed, and in a voice of mingled sorrow and resentment, Jessie told him of the falsehood which had been imposed upon the gentle girl lying there so near them.

It would be impossible to describe Walter's anger and disgust, as he listened to the story of Ellen's wrongs.

"The wretch! He killed her!" he exclaimed, "killed her through love for him, and her unselfish devotion to you."

"But he *did* love her," interrupted Jessie, "or he had never been here to-night."

Walter could not comprehend a love like this. It was not what he felt for the dark-haired girl at his side, and in his joy at finding that she, too, thoroughly despised one whom he had feared might be his rival, he came near telling her so, but he remembered in time the promise made to Mrs. Bartow, and merely said:

"Forgive me, Jessie. I have fancied you loved this rascally fellow, and it made me very unhappy, for I knew he was unworthy."

"Are you not sometimes unreasonably suspicious of me?" Jessie asked, and Walter replied:

"If I am, it is because,—because,—I would have my sister happy, and now that Nellie is dead, you are all I have to love."

It surely was not wrong for him to say so much, he thought, and Jessie must have thought so too, for impulsively laying her hand in his, she looked up into his face and answered:

"There must never be another cloud between us."

For a long time they sat together among the graves, and then, as it was growing late, they retraced their steps toward the farm-house, where only Mrs. Bellenger was waiting for them, the others having retired to rest.

To her, with Jessie's consent, Walter told what he had heard, but not till Jessie had left them for the night. Covering her face with her hands, Mrs. Bellenger groaned aloud at this fresh proof of William's perfidy.

"There is one comfort, however," she said, at last, "Jessie is not bound to him," and she spoke hopefully to Walter of his future.

"It may be," he said, "but my father must first be proved innocent. I am going to find him, too," and then he told his grandmother that Mr. Graham had long contemplated sending him to California on business connected with the firm. "Next September is the time appointed for me to go, and something tells me that I shall find my father in my travels."

Then he told her that if he could arrange it, he should spend several weeks at home, as the family were now so

lonely, and as Mrs. Bellenger was herself, ere long, going to Boston, she offered no remonstrance to the plan.

The moon by this time had reached a point high up in the heavens, and bidding him good night she left him sitting there alone, dreaming bright dreams of the future, when the little hand which not long ago had crept of its own accord into his own, should be his indeed. But what if it should never be proved that his father was innocent? Could he keep his promise forever? He dared not answer this, but there swept over him again, as it had done many times of late, the belief that ere a year had passed, Seth Marshall would stand before the world an honored and respected man. Until that time he was willing to wait, he said, and the moon had long since passed the zenith and was shining through the western window into the room where Jessie Graham lay sleeping ere he left his seat beneath the vines, and sought his pillow to realize in dreamland the happiness in store for him.



## CHAPTER XII.

A CRISIS.

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THE next morning, Mrs. Bellenger, Jessie and Walter returned to the city, the latter promising his family that he would if possible obtain leave of absence from his business for several weeks, and be with them in the first stages of their bereavement.

To this plan Mr. Graham made no objection, and without seeing William, who chanced to be out of the city, Walter went back to Deerwood, while his grandmother also started on her projected visit to Boston.

Lonely indeed was Walter's life at the farm-house, and not even the cheering letters of Mr. Graham, which always contained a pleasant message from Jessie, had the power to enliven his solitude. He had tasted of the busy world, and a life of inactivity could not satisfy him now. So he wrote at last to Mr. Graham, asking why he could not start at once for California, instead of waiting until September.

With a father's ready tact, Mr. Graham understood exactly the nature of Walter's feelings toward his daughter, and as Mrs. Bartow had told him of the young man's promise, he watched him narrowly to see how well it would be kept.



"He is a noble fellow," he thought, "and he shall not wait for what may never be. I am sure Jessie loves him quite as much as he does her, and I will bring them together in my own way, and when September comes he shall not go to California alone;" so in reply to Walter's letter, he wrote: "You can go at once if you like, though I have in mind a pleasant surprise if you will wait until autumn," and as he wrote his own heart grew young and warm again, with fancying Walter's joy when he should say to him, "I know your secret, and you need not wait. Jessie loves you. Take her and be happy."

And as thoughts of his own daughter's possible bridal suggested to him another, he dipped his pen a second time, and added as a postscript.

"There is a rumor of a marriage to take place before long, and Jessie, I dare say, will wish you to be present, so perhaps you'd better wait."

Over the postscript Walter lingered long and anxiously. Was Jessie to be the bride? It would seem so, and yet there was madness in the thought. Once he resolved to go and see, and this he would perhaps have done had not the next mail brought him confirmation of his fears. It was from his cousin, and read as follows:

"DEAR WALT :—You will be greatly surprised, I dare say, to hear that I have caught the bird at last, and the tenth of July, at eleven A. M., will see us one. It is sudden, I know; but all the better for that. She wanted to wait until fall and have a grand smash-up, but I, with her grandmother to back me, insisted upon its taking place immediately, and in a quiet way. We shall be married in church, and then go off to some watering-place. Her father does the handsome thing, and comes down with a cool 50,000 on her bridal day, but that's nothing for a millionaire. I'm more obliged to you, Walt, than I can well express, for not interfering. At one time I was

deuced jealous, but you behaved like a gentleman, and left me an open field, for which I thank you, and cordially invite you to the wedding.

"By the way, Jessie says you know about that unfortunate affair with poor Nellie. Believe me, Walt, I loved that girl, and even now the thought of her takes my breath away; but she was too poor. Isn't it lucky Jessie is rich? You ought to see how delighted my grandmother-elect is with the match. But time hastens, and I must finish. Remember, July 10, hour 11, from — Church. Adieu.

"BILL BELLENGER."

For a time after reading the letter Walter sat powerless to act or think. Then the storm burst upon him with overwhelming fury, and he raved like one bereft of reason. Jessie was lost to him forever, and, what was worse than all, she had proved herself unworthy of esteem by her heartless treachery. How could she so soon forget the little grave on the hillside? How could she plight her faith to one whom, only a few weeks since, she had denounced so strongly? Was there no truth in woman? Were they all as false as fair? Yes, they were, he said; and he laughed bitterly as he thought how, hereafter, he should hate the entire sex. Walter was growing desperate, and, in his desperation he resolved to put the width of the western hemisphere between himself and the fickle Jessie Graham. He could go to California now as well as later, and he determined to start for New York that night. So with a hurried good-bye to his family he left them, and scarcely knowing whether he were dead or alive, he took the express for the city.

It was morning when he reached there, and the Wall street thunder had already commenced. His first business was to ascertain that a vessel would sail that day for California,—his next to call on Mr. Graham and make the necessary explanations.

Mr. Graham was not at the office,—he was sick, the clerk said, and as Walter had neither the time nor inclination to go all the way up-town to find him, he sat down and wrote him what he would have said.

He was going to California, and the reason why he went Mr. Graham could perhaps divine; if not, Walter would tell him frankly that he could not stay in New York and see a man of William Bellenger's character married to the girl he loved better than he loved his life.

"I understand the business on which I am going thoroughly, I believe," he added in conclusion; "but if there is anything more you wish to say, you can write it by the next steamer, and your directions shall be attended to most strictly."

This letter he left for Mr. Graham, and when the night shadows fell again on Deerwood, where in the large old kitchen the family talked of him, he sat upon the upper deck listening, with an aching heart, to the surging of the waves, as they dashed against his floating home.



## CHAPTER XIII.

EXPLANATIONS.

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AFTER Jessie's return to the city, several days had elapsed ere she met with William; and when at last she did, he saw at once that there was a change in her demeanor,—that she was unusually reserved; but this he hoped might arise from the sad scene through which she had recently passed, and as he was fast nearing a point when something must be done, he resolved upon a decisive step.

His attentions to Jessie must have prepared her for a proposal, he thought, and as it would be better for him to know his fate at once, so that in case she refused him, he could look elsewhere for aid, he determined to improve the present opportunity, which so far as outward circumstances were concerned seemed propitious.

Mr. Graham was away, and Mrs. Bartow kindly absented herself from the room, as was her custom when William was present. The night was rainy too, and they would not be liable to interruption. Accordingly when Jessie spoke to him of Nellie's death, and gave him the note which had been intrusted to her, he drew his chair to her side, and, after a few preliminary coughs, plunged at once into business, and made her a formal offer of him-

self, saying that he knew he was very faulty, but she could mould him as she pleased, and make him a good and useful man.

With a cold, haughty look upon her face, Jessie Graham listened to him until he finished, and then said :

"You astonish me more than I can express, for if you do not respect yourself, I hoped you had too much respect for me to offer me a hand reeking, as it were, with the blood of sweet Nellie Howland. I know it all,—know the lie you imposed upon the poor, weak girl, whose only fault was loving you too well. And now do you think I would marry you? I have never seen the hour when I would have done so,—much less will I do it now. I despise you, William Bellenger,—despise you more than I can tell."

She ceased speaking, but her eyes never for a moment left the white face, which had grown whiter as she proceeded, and which was now almost livid with chagrin, disappointment and rage.

"I have nothing to offer which can extenuate my sin toward Nellie," he answered, at last, "though I did love her,—better than I love you,—but for certain reasons, I preferred that you should be my wife. You refuse me, and I know well to whom I am indebted for the good opinion you are pleased to entertain of me; but I warn you now, fair lady, that my precious cousin is no better than myself."

"Hush!" interrupted Jessie. "You are not to speak of Walter in that way. Shall I consider our interview at an end?"

She spoke with dignity, and motioned him toward the door.

"Jessie," he stammered, as he started to leave the room, "I'll admit that I'm a wretch, but I trust that you will not think it necessary to repeat this to everybody."

"I have no desire to injure you," she answered, and walking to the window she stood until she heard him leave the house; then her unwonted calmness gave way, and she burst into a flood of tears, sometimes wishing she had spoken more harshly to him, and again regretting that she had been harsh at all.

She might have spared herself this last feeling, for at that moment the man she had discarded was pouring into the ear of Charlotte Reeves words similar to those he had breathed to her not an hour before. And Charlotte, knowing nothing of Nellie,—nothing of Jessie, save that the latter had been a dreaded rival, said *yes* to him, on condition that her father's consent could be won.

This last was an easy matter; for Mr. Reeves, who scarcely had an identity save that connected with his business, answered that in this thing Charlotte would do as she pleased, just as she did in everything else, adding in a kind of absent way:

"I always intended giving her fifty thousand the day she was married and after that my duty will be done."

William could scarcely refrain from hugging his prospective father-in-law, but he wisely withheld the hug for the daughter, who, while he was closeted with the father, ran with the news to the grandmother.

The next morning, as Jessie sat at her work, she was

surprised at a call from Charlotte, who, seating herself upon the sofa began at once to unfold the object of her visit.

"She was engaged, and Jessie could not guess to whom if she guessed a year."

"William Bellenger," Jessie said at once, her lip curling with scorn, and her cheek growing slightly pale.

"You wicked creature," exclaimed Charlotte, jumping up and giving her a squeeze. "What made you think of him? I always supposed he would marry you, and used to be awful jealous. Yes, it's William. He came in last night and as pa chanced to be home in his room, the whole thing was arranged at once. I wanted so badly to wait till fall, and have a grand affair, but William is in such a hurry, and says it will be so much nicer to be a bride and belle, too, at Newport or Nahant, that I gave it up, and we are to be married the 10th of July, and go right off. Wont it be fun? I'm going to employ every dressmaker in the city, that is, every fashionable one. Father gave me a thousand dollars this morning to begin my shopping with," and the thoughtless light-hearted Charlotte clapped her hands and danced around the room in childish delight.

"Shall I tell her? Ought I to tell her?" Jessie thought, looking into the bright face of the young girl,

Then as she remembered how really good-natured William was, and that after all he might make a kind husband, she resolved to throw no cloud over the happiness of her friend, and congratulated her as cordially as it was possible for her to do. But Charlotte detected



the absence of something in her manner, and imputing it to a feeling of chargin at having lost Mr. Bellenger, she soon brought her visit to a close, and hastened home, telling her grandmother that she believed Jessie Graham was terribly disappointed, for she was as white as a ghost, and could scarcely keep from crying.

Meantime William, in a most singular state of mind, tried to play the part of a devoted lover to Charlotte,—avoided an interview with Jessie,—received quite indifferently the congratulations of his friends, and spent the remainder of his time in hating Walter, who, he believed, stood between him and Jessie Graham, just as he was sure he stood between him and his rich grandmother.

"I'll torment him while I can," he thought. "I'll make him think for a time, at least, that Jessie is lost," and sitting down he wrote the carefully-worded letter which had sent Walter so suddenly from home. "There," said he, as he read it over, "he can infer what he pleases. I don't say it's Jessie I'm going to marry; but he can think so, if he likes, and I don't envy him his cogitations."

William could not have devised a way of wounding Walter more deeply than the letter had wounded him, or of affecting Jessie more sensibly than she was affected, when she heard that Walter had gone to California.

"Not gone!" she cried, when her father brought to her the news. "Not gone, without a word for me. Oh, father, it was cruel! Didn't he leave a message for you?"

"Yes, read it if you choose," and Mr. Graham passed to her the letter which had greatly puzzled him.

Was it possible he had been deceived? Was it Char-

lotte Reeves, and not his daughter, whom Walter Marshall loved? It would seem so, and yet he could not be mistaken; Walter must have been misinformed as to the bride. Jessie, perhaps, could explain; and he stood watching her face as she read the letter.

At first it turned very red, then spotted, and then, as the horrible truth burst upon her, it became as white as marble, and stretching out her arms she moaned:

"Oh father, I never thought that he loved Charlotte Reeves. I most wish I were dead;" and with another cry, Jessie lay sobbing in her father's arms. Very gently he tried to soothe her; and then, when she was better, laid her upon the sofa, and kneeling beside her, kissed away the tears which rolled down her cheeks so fast.

She had betrayed her secret, or rather it had been betrayed to herself, and winding her arms around her father's neck, she whispered:

"I didn't know that before I,—that I,—oh, father,—I guess I do love Walter better than I supposed; and I guess I thought that he loved me. You won't tell anybody will you?" and she laid her burning cheek against his own

"Jessie," he said, "I have known for a long time that you loved Walter Marshall. Once I believed that he loved you. I believe so still. There is surely some mistake. I will inquire of William."

Mr. Graham did not know why he should seek for an explanation from William Bellenger, but he could think of nothing else, and after Jessie was somewhat composed, he sought an interview with that young man, asking him

if he knew of any reason why his cousin should start so suddenly for California, without a word from any one

"I should suppose he might have waited until after your marriage with *Miss Reeves*?" and Mr. Graham fixed his eyes upon Will, who colored slightly as he replied:

"Oh, yes, I wrote to him about it, and invited him to be present."

Mr. Graham was puzzled. If William wrote as he said, Walter could not have been deceived, and he wended his way homeward, quite uncertain how to act. At last, he decided that as he must write to Walter by the next steamer, he would take particular pains to speak of Charlotte as having been the bride, and this might, perhaps, bring Walter back sooner than was expected. Still he would not tell this to Jessie, lest she should be disappointed, and day after day her face grew less merry than of old until at last the kind-hearted Charlotte, who watched her narrowly, threw her arms around her neck, and said to her, entreatingly:

"What is it, Jessie? Did you love William, and does it make you so unhappy to have him marry me?"

"No, no," and Jessie recoiled from her in horror. "I never loved William Bellenger,—never saw the day when I would have married him,—never, as I live!" and she spoke so indignantly that Charlotte, a little piqued, replied:

"Don't scream so loud, if you didn't. I only asked you because I knew something had ailed you ever since I was engaged. Others notice it too; and, if I were you, I'd try to appear cheerful, even if I did not feel it."

Greatly as Jessie was annoyed, she resolved to act upon this advice, for she would not have people think that she cared for William Bellenger. So she roused herself from the state of listless indifference into which she had fallen, and Charlotte Reeves no longer had reason to complain of her dulness, or non-appreciation of the bridal finery, which was so ostentatiously displayed, and which greatly annoyed Mrs. Bartow.

This lady was secretly chagrined at what she considered Charlotte's good luck, and at Mrs. Reeves' evident exultation, and she took great pains to let the latter know that she did not care and on the whole was glad William was going to do so well. Jessie would never have accepted him, even if she had had a chance; and for the sake of dear Mrs. Bellenger, she was pleased to think the Reeves family was so respectable. Of course she never did believe that ridiculous story about the tin-pedler, and she couldn't see who had reported it. She had been asked about it, two or three times, and had always told exactly how the story originated, and said it was not true.

This speech she made in substance several times to Mrs. Reeves, when that lady was congratulating herself upon her granddaughter's brilliant prospects, and insisting that "Jessie was a year the oldest; basing her assertion upon the fact that she bought her camel's hair shawl so many years ago, and Jessie was born that very day,"

"And I," retorted Mrs. Bartow, "remember that my daughter Graham's silver tea-set was sent home the

morning after Jessie was born, and that has the date on it, so I can't be wrong. And another thing which makes me sure, is that a raw country girl we had just hired insisted that it was tin, saying her father was a peddler, and she guessed she knew."

At the mention of tin of any kind, Mrs. Reeves always seemed uneasy; and as Mrs. Bartow frequently took occasion to name the offensive article in her hearing, she resolved at last to steal a day or so from the excitement at home, and see if she too, could not find a weapon with which to fight her friend.

Accordingly, one morning, when Mrs. Bartow called to tell her that "people said William Bellenger would drink and gamble too," she was informed that the lady was out of town, and so she contented herself with repeating the story to Charlotte, adding that she didn't believe it herself, and she wondered why people would talk so.

Charlotte wondered too, and said that those who repeated such scandal were quite as bad as the originators, a remark in which Mrs. Bartow fully concurred, saying, "if there was anything she despised it was a talebearer."

The next day but one as she sat with Jessie in her little sewing-room, Mrs. Reeves was announced, and after a few preliminary remarks, began:

"By the way, my dear Mrs. Bartow, I have been to Springfield, and remembering what you said about that woman in Deerwood, I thought I'd run over there and see her just to convince her that she was mistaken in thinking she ever knew me or my father."

"Yes, yes. It's pretty warm in here, isn't it? Jessie,

hadn't you better go where it is cooler?" said Mrs. Bartow, and Jessie replied:

"I am not uncomfortable, and I want to hear about Deerwood. Isn't it a pleasant old town?" and she turned to Mrs. Reeves, who answered:

"Charming! and those Marshalls are such kind, worthy people. But what an odd specimen that Aunt Debby is; and what a wonderful memory she has, though, of course, she remembers some things which never could have been, for instance——"

"Jessie will you bring me my salts, or will you go away, it's so close in here," came faintly from the distressed lady, who had dropped her work, and was nervously unbuttoning the top of her dress.

"Do you feel choked?" asked Mrs. Reeves, while Jessie answered:

"I'll get your salts, grandma; but I don't wish to go out, unless Mrs. Reeves has something to tell which I must no' hear."

"Certainly not," returned Mrs. Reeves. "It's false, I'm sure, just as false as that ridiculous story about the tin peddler and factory girl. I convinced Aunt Debby that she was wrong. It was some other Charlotte Gregory she used to know."

"Of course it was; I always said so," and a violent sneeze followed the remark and a too strong inhalation of the salts.

"As I was saying," persisted Mrs. Reeves, "Aunt Debby knows everybody who has lived since the flood, and even pretended to have known you, after I told her

your name was Lummis, before you were adopted by Mrs. Stanwood."

"Oh, delightful," cried Jessie. "Do pray give us the entire family tree, root and all. Was grandma's father a cobbler, or did he make the *tin things* yours used to *paddle*?" and the saucy black eyes looked archly at both the ladies.

"I don't know what her father was," said Mrs. Reeves, "but Aunt Debby pretends that Martha Lummis,—Patty, as she called her——"

"That's the name in the old black book, grandma, that you said belonged to a friend," interrupted Jessie, and while grandma groaned, Mrs. Reeves continued:

"Said that Patty did housework in Hopkinton, and I believe could milk *seventeen* cows to her one!"

"Oh," said Jessie, "how I wish I could milk. It's such fun. I did try once, but got the tiniest stream, and Walter said I'd dry the cows all up. I wish you could hear *him* when he first begins. It sounds like hail stones rattling on the *tin pail*. Did yours sound so, grandma, and did you buy the pail of Mr. Gregory?"

Mrs. Reeves, by this time, began to think that Jessie might be making fun of her, and smothering her wrath, she proceeded:

"I shouldn't care anything about the housework or the milking, but I'll confess I *was* shocked, when she spoke of——"

"I certainly am going to faint, Jessie, do go out," gasped the white figure in the rocking chair, while Jessie rejoined:



"I don't see how my going out can help you." Then crossing over to her grandmother, she whispered, "Brave it out. • *Don't* let her see that you care."

Thus entreated Mrs. Bartow became somewhat composed, and her tormentor went on :

"This Patty Lummis, Aunt Debby said, was blood relation to *three Thayers*, who were hung some years ago for murdering *John Love*, or some such name. I remember hearing of it at the time, but did not suppose I knew any of their relatives."

"Horrid!" cried Jessie, and then, as she saw how white her grandmother was, she added quickly :

"And didn't she say too, that the Gregorys *ought* to have been hung if they wern't?"

"Such impertinence," muttered Mrs. Reeves, while Jessie rejoined :

"There are very few families, which, if traced to the fountain head, have not a halter, or peddler's cart, or a smell of tallow, or shoemaker's wax——"

"Or a woollen factory, Jessie. Don't forget that," suggested Mrs. Bartow, and Jessie added, laughingly :

"Yes, a woollen factory, and as you and grandma do not belong to the few who are exempt from a stain of any kind, if honorable work can be called a stain, I advise you to drop old scores, and let the past be forgotten."

"I'm sure I'm willing," sobbed Mrs. Bartow. "I never did tell that ridiculous story to but one, and she promised not to breathe it as long as she lived."

"And will you take it back?" chimed in Mrs. Reeves.

"Ye-es. I'll do everything I can toward it," answered the distracted old lady. "I couldn't help those *Thayers*. I never saw them in my life, and they were only second cousins."

"*Fourth* to you, then," and Mrs. Reeves nodded to Jessie, who replied :

"I don't care if they were *first*. Everybody knows me, and my position in society does not depend upon what my family have been before me, but upon what I am myself. Isn't it so, father?" and she turned to Mr. Graham, who had just entered the room.

"I don't know the nature of your conversation," he replied, "but I overheard your last remarks, and fully concur with you, that persons are to be respected for themselves and not for their family; neither are they to be despised for what their family or any member of it may do."

There was a tremor in his voice, and looking at him closely, Jessie saw that he was very pale, and evidently much agitated.

"What is it, father?" she cried, forgetting the *three Thayers* and thinking only of Walter. "What has happened?"

Mr. Graham did not reply to her, but turning to Mrs. Reeves, he said :

"Excuse me, madam, but I think your duty calls you home, where poor Charlotte needs your sympathy."

"Why *poor* Charlotte?" replied Jessie, grasping his arm. "Is William sick or dead?"

"He has been arrested for forgery. I may as well tell

it first as last," and the words dropped slowly from Mr. Graham's lips.

"*Forgery!* William arrested! It's false!" shrieked Mrs. Reeves, and the salts which Mrs. Bartow had used so vigorously a little time before changed hands, while Jessie passed her arm around the lady to keep her from falling to the floor. "It's false. He never forged. Why should he? Isn't he rich, and a Bellenger?" she kept repeating, until at last Mr. Graham answered:

"It is too true, my dear madam, that for some time past Mr. Bellenger has been engaged in a systematic course of forging, managing always to escape detection, until now, it has been clearly proved against him, and he is in the hands of the law."

There was no reason why Mrs. Reeves, at this point, should think of Walter, but she did, and fancying that her auditors might possibly be drawing comparisons between the two cousins she said:

"It's the *Marshall* blood with which he is tainted."

"Marshall blood!" repeated Jessie, indignantly. "I'd like to know by what chemical process you have mingled the Marshall blood with William Bellenger's."

Mrs. Reeves could not explain. She only knew that she was completely overwhelmed with surprise and mortification, and she seemed so bewildered and helpless that Mr. Graham ordered his carriage, and sent her to No. —, whither the sad news had preceded her, and where Charlotte lay fainting and moaning in the midst of her bridal finery, which would never be worn. She had noticed William's absence from the house for the last

twenty-four hours, and was wondering at it, when her father, roused by the shock from his usual state of quiet passiveness, rushed in, telling her in thunder tones that her affianced husband had been guilty of forging Graham & Marshall's name, not once, not twice, but many times, until at last he was detected and under arrest.

"He'll go to State prison, girl—do you hear? To State prison! Why don't you speak, and not sit staring at me with that milky face!"

Poor Charlotte could not speak, but she fainted and fell at the feet of her father, who became himself at once, and bending kindly over her brought her back to life. It was not that Charlotte loved William so very much. It was rather her pride which was wounded, and she moaned and wept until her grandmother came, and with her lamentations and reproaches, so wholly outdid all Charlotte had done, that the latter grew suddenly calm, and without a word or a tear, sat motionless, while the old lady raved on, one moment talking as if they were all going to prison together, and the next giving Charlotte most uncomfortable squeezes to think she was not the wife of a forger after all.

The *three Thayers* were for the time forgotten, and when at Charlotte's request Jessie came to see her, accompanied by her grandmother, Mrs. Reeves kissed the latter affectionately, whispering in her ear:

"We'll not mind the past, for the present has enough of trouble and disgrace."

Great was the excitement among William's friends, the

majority of whom turned against him, saying "they expected it, and knew all the time that something was wrong."

Mr. Graham stood by and pitied the cowed and wretched young man, and pitied him all the more that his father kept aloof, saying :

"He's made his bed and he may lie in it."

At the first intimation of the sad affair, Mrs. Bellenger hastened home, but neither her money nor her influence, and both were freely used, could disprove the guilt of the young man, who awaited his trial in a state of mind bordering on despair.

Only once did he speak of Charlotte, and that on the day which was to have seen her his bride. Then, with Mr. Graham, he talked of her freely, asking what effect it had on her, and appearing greatly agitated when told that she was very ill, and would see none of her friends but Jessie.

"God bless her,—Jessie, I mean," he said, "and bless poor Lottie, too. I am sorry I brought this trouble upon her. I thought to pay the notes with her money, and I resolved after that to be a better man. I am glad Nellie did not live to see this day. Do you think that up in Heaven she knows what I have done and prays for me still?"

Then, as talking of Nellie naturally brought Walter to his mind, he confessed to Mr. Graham how his letter had sent his cousin away.

"I thought once to win Jessie for myself," he said, "and so I broke poor Nellie's heart. I purposely with-

held the note the deacon sent to Jessie, bidding her come ere Nellie died. And this I did because I feared what the result might be of Jessie's going there. But my sin has found me out, and I shall never cross Walter's path again ; it's Jessie he loves ; tell her so, and bring the light back to her eyes, which were heavy with tears when I saw her last."

Mr. Graham did tell her, and when next she went to the chamber where Charlotte lay sick of a slow fever, there was an increased bloom upon her cheek, and a brighter flash in her dark eye, while from her own great happiness she strove to draw some comfort for her friend, who would suffer no other one of her acquaintance to approach her.

Jessie alone could comfort her, Jessie alone knew what to say, and the right time to say it, and when at last the trial came, and the verdict of "guilty" was pronounced, it was Jessie who broke the news as gently as possible to the pale invalid.

Locked in each other's arms they wept together ; the one, tears of pity ; the other, tears of regret and mortification over the misguided man whose home for the next five years would be a dreary prison.

There was no going to Saratoga that summer, no trip to Newport ; and when the gay world congregated there asked for the sprightly girl who had been with them the season before, and for the old lady who carried her head so proudly and sported such superb diamonds, the answer was a mysterious whisper of some dire misfortune or disgrace which had befallen them, and then the dance and

the song in which Charlotte had ever been the first to join, went on the same as before.

Gradually as Charlotte recovered her strength and her spirits, she began to wish for some quiet spot where no one knew her, and remembering dear old Deerwood, now a thousand times more dear since she knew of Walter's love, Jessie told her of its shadowy woods, its pleasant walks, its musical pines with the rustic seat beneath, and Charlotte, pleased with her rural picture, bade her write and ask if she could come.

So Jessie wrote, and in less than one week's time two girls walked again upon the mountain side, or paused by the little grave where Nellie was buried. Upon the bank close to the mound a single rose was growing,—the last of the sisterhood. It had been late in unfolding its delicate leaves, and when at last, it was full blown, Jessie picked it, and pressing it carefully, sent it with the message, "it grew near Nellie's grave," to the weary man whose life was now one of toil and loneliness.





## CHAPTER XIV.

THE STRANGER NURSE.

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THE regular boarders at the —— Hotel were discussing their dinner with all the haste and greediness which characterizes their Eastern brethren. The first and second courses had been removed, and the merits of the dessert were about to be tested, when for a moment the operation ceased, while the operators welcomed back to their midst a middle-aged man, who for a few weeks had been absent from the city.

That Captain Murdock was a general favorite, could readily be seen by the heartiness of his greeting from his friends, and that he was worthy of esteem, none knew better than the hundreds of poor and destitute who had often been relieved and comforted by his well-filled purse, and words of genuine sympathy. Possessed of unbounded wealth, he scattered it about him with no miserly hand, and many a child of poverty blessed him for the great good done to him.

"Well, captain," said one of the boarders, "glad to see you back. We've been mighty lonesome without you. Found your room occupied, didn't you?"

"Yes," returned the man addressed as captain, "the landlord tells me he took the liberty to put the young

man in there because the house was so full. Of course, he couldn't know that he would be too sick to vacate the premises in the morning; but it's all right. I, who have slept so often on the ground, don't mind camping on the floor now and then."

Here a dozen voices interposed offering him a part or the whole of their rooms, but the good-natured captain declined them all, saying "he should do very well, and perhaps the young man would not be sick long. Did they know where he came from? Was he a stranger or a resident in California?"

A stranger, they replied, adding that he came from New York about two weeks before, and had almost immediately been taken sick, and that was all they knew about him.

Dinner being over, Captain Murdock went up to his room, not to see the sick man particularly, but because he wished to remove to another apartment a few articles which he would probably need.

Walter, for it was he, was sleeping, while near him, in an arm-chair, dozed the old crone who had been hired to nurse him. One glance at the former convinced the captain that he was poorly cared for and must necessarily be very uncomfortable. Still he might not have interfered, had not the sick man moaned uneasily in his sleep, and turning on his side, murmured the name of *father*.

Never had Captain Murdock been thus addressed,—no infant arms had ever twined themselves around his neck,—no sweet voice called him *father*,—and yet this one

word thrilled him with an undefinable emotion, awakening at once within his bosom feelings of tender pity for the sick man, who seemed so young and helpless.

"Poor boy," he whispered, "he is dreaming of his home away in the East, and of the loved ones who little know how much he needs their care," and advancing toward the bedside, he adjusted the tumbled pillows, smoothed the soiled spread, pushed back the tangled hair from the burning forehead, and was turning away when Walter awoke, and fixing his bright eyes upon him, said faintly, "Don't go."

Thus entreated the captain sat down beside him, while the old nurse roused up, exclaiming :

"Sakes alive' captain ! is that you ? Ain't you feared the fever catching ? He's got it mightily in his head, and keeps a goin' on about Jessy, his brother, I guess, or some chap he know'd at home."

At the mention of Jessie, Walter turned his eyes again upon the captain, and said.

"Jessie's married. Did you know it ?"

"Yes, I know it," answered the captain, thinking it best to humor the whim. "Whom did she marry ?"

"William," was the reply, "and I loved her so much."

At this point the nurse arose, saying :

"Bein' you're here, I'll go out a bit," and she left the room.

Walter looked uneasily after her, and when she was gone, said :

"Lock the door, and keep her out. Don't let her come back. She's one of Macbeth's witches, and makes one

think of Jessie's grandmother, who won't let me talk of love to Jessie, until I am—well, no matter what. Do you know my father?"

"No," and the captain shook his head mournfully while Walter continued:

"Are you anybody's father?"

"I don't know," and the voice was sadder than when it spoke before.

"I'm looking for my father," Walter said, "just as Tele-machus looked for his. Do you know Ulysses?"

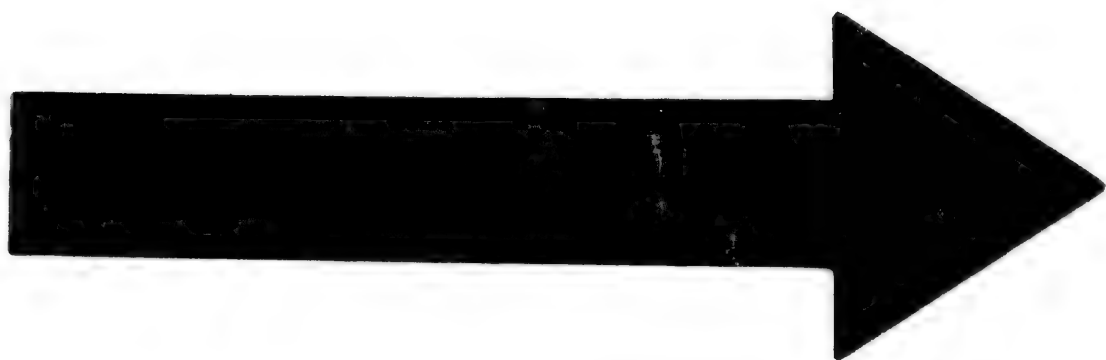
The captain had heard of Ulysses, and the mention of him carried him back to an old stone house on the hill, where he had read the wonderful adventures of the hero.

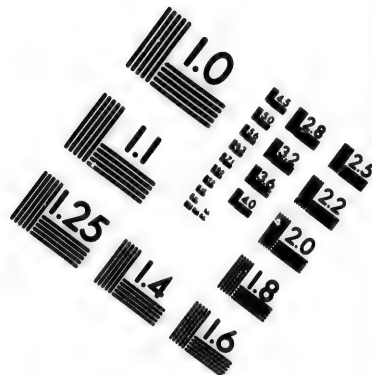
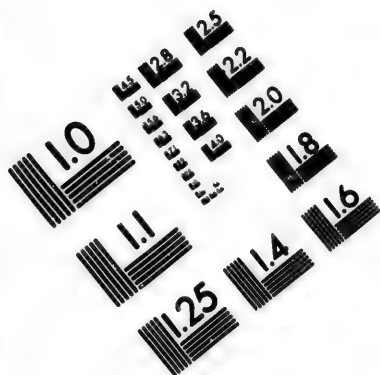
"Well," Walter continued, "I am hunting for my father, and Jessie cried up in the pines when I told her about him, and how her father testified against him. Do you know Mr. Graham?"

"Who?" screamed the captain, bounding to his feet, and bending so near to Walter that his hot breath stirred the thick brown hair. "Do I know whom?"

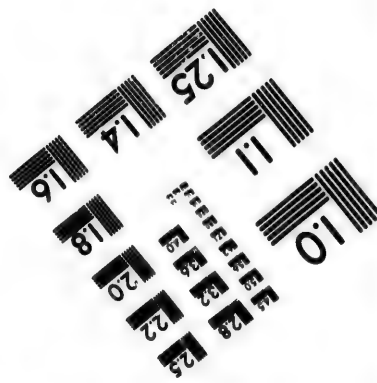
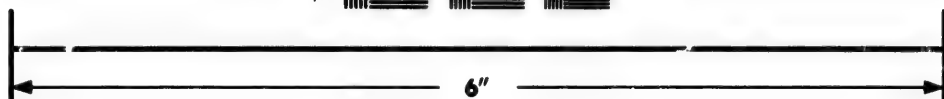
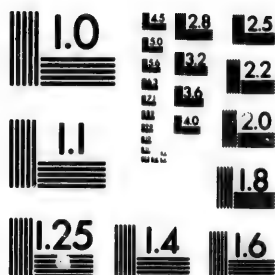
But Walter refused to answer, or even to speak; the captain's manner had startled him, or it may be there was something in the keen eye fixed so earnestly upon him, which held him speechless.

For a moment the two gazed fixedly at each other,—the old man and the young,—the latter with a bright vacant stare, while the other sought for some token to tell him that it was not without a reason his heart beat so fast with a hope of he scarcely knew what.





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"I will inquire below," he said at last, as he failed to elicit any information from Walter, and going to the office, he turned the leaves of the register back to the day when he left three weeks before.

Then with untiring patience he read on and on, read Jones and Smith, and Smith and Brown, some with wives and some without, some with daughters, some with sisters, and some alone, but none as yet were sent to No. 40. So he read on again and then at last he found the name he sought,—WALTER MARSHALL.

"Thank God! thank God!" he uttered faintly, and those who heard only the last word thought to themselves:

"I never knew the captain *swore* before."

With a great effort he compelled himself to be calm, and when at last he spoke none detected in his voice a trace of the shock that name had given him, bringing back at once the gable-roofed farm-house far away, the maple tree where his name was cut, the brown-haired wife, the stormy night when the wind rushed sobbing past the window where he stood and looked his last on her, the mother long since dead, and the father who believed him guilty.

All this passed in rapid review before his mind, and then his thoughts came back to the present time, and centered themselves upon the restless, tossing form which, up in No. 40, had said to him:

"Do you know my father?"

"What is it, captain?" the landlord asked. "Your face is white as paper."

"I am thinking," and the captain spoke naturally, "I am thinking that I will take care of that young man. I find I know his people, or used to know them, rather. Dismiss that imbecile old woman," and having said so much he left the room and fled up the stairs seeing nothing but that name as it looked upon the page,—  
WALTER MARSHALL.

He repeated it again and again, and in the tone with which he did so there was a peculiar tenderness, such as mothers are only supposed to feel toward their children.

"Walter Marshall,—my boy,—Ellen's and mine," and over the boy, which was Ellen's and his, the man, old before his time, bent down and wept great tear-drops, which fell upon the white handsome face, which grew each moment more and more like the young girl wife, whose grave the broken-hearted husband had never looked upon.

"Why do you cry?" asked Walter, and the captain replied:

"I had a son once like you, and it makes me cry to see you here so sick. I am going to take care of you, too, and send that woman off."

"Oh! will you?" was Walter's joyful cry, "and will you stay until I find my father?"

"Yes, yes, I will stay with you always," and again Seth Marshall's lips touched those of his son.

"Isn't it funny for men to kiss men?" Walter asked, passing his hand over the spot. "I thought they only kissed women, girls like Jessie, and I don't kiss her now. I haven't since she was a little thing and gave me one of

her curls. It's in my trunk, with a lock of mother's hair. Did you know *mother*, man?"

"Yes, yes, oh, Heaven, yes," and the man thus questioned fell upon his knees, and hiding his face in the bed-clothes, sobbed aloud.

His grief distressed Walter, who, without understanding it clearly, felt that he was himself in some way connected with it, and laying his hand upon the gray hair within his reach, he smoothed it caressingly, saying:

"Don't cry. It won't do any good. I used to cry when I was a boy and thought of poor, dear father."

"Say it again. Say 'poor, dear father,' once more," and the white, haggard face lifted itself slowly up and crept on until it lay beside the feverish one upon the pillow.

Thus it was the father met his son, and all through the afternoon he sat by him soothing him to sleep, and then bending fondly over him to watch him while he slept.

"He is some like Ellen," he whispered, but more like me, as I was in my early manhood, and yet, as he lies sleeping, there is a look about him that I have often seen on Ellen's face when she was asleep. Darling wife, we little thought when we talked together of our child, that the first time I beheld him would be beneath the California skies, and he a bearded man."

Then, as he remembered what Walter had said of the hair, he opened the lid of the trunk, and hunted until he found Jessie's raven curl, and the longer, browner tress. He knew in a moment that it was Ellen's hair,—and

kissing it reverently he twined it about his fingers just as he used to when the soft eyes it shaded looked lovingly into his.

"Walter's is like it," he said, stealing to the bedside, and laying it among the brown locks of his son. "Bless my boy,—bless my boy!" and going back again, he placed the lock of hair beside this jet black ringlet wondering who Jessie was, and why she had married another.

It was growing dark when Walter awoke, but between himself and the window he saw the outline of his friend, and knowing he was not alone, fell away again into sleep, resting better that night than he had done before since the commencement of his illness.

For many days Captain Murdock watched by him, and when at last the danger was passed, and Walter restored to consciousness, he was the first to know it, and bending over him he breathed a prayer of thankfulness for the restoration of his son.

"Who are you?" Walter asked, after objects and events had assumed a rational form. "Who are you, and why have you been so kind to me, as I am sure you have?"

"I am called Captain Murdock," was the answer. "This is my room; and one I have occupied for a long, long time. I left the city some weeks ago on business and during my absence you came. As the house was full the landlord put you in here for one night, but in the morning you were too ill to be moved. You have been very sick, and as your nurse was none of the best, I dismissed her and took care of you myself, because if I had a son in a strange land I should want some one to care for him,

and I only did what your father would wish me to do. You have a father young man?"

The question was put affirmatively, and without looking at the eyes fixed so intently on him, Walter colored crimson as he replied:

"I hope I have, though I don't know. I never saw him except in dreams."

Captain Murdock turned toward the window for a moment, and then in a calm voice continued:

"I will not seek your confidence. You said some strange things in your delirium, but they are safe with me,—as safe as if I were the father you never saw. This came for you some days ago," and he held up Mr. Graham's letter, the sight of which had wrung a cry of pain from his own lips, for he knew whose hand had traced the name that letter bore.

"And has anybody written to the people at home?" Walter asked, and Captain Murdock replied:

"Yes, the landlord sent a few lines, saying that you were ill, but well cared for. He directed to 'Walter Marshall's Friends, Deerwood, Mass.,' for by looking over your papers, we found your family lived there. A grandfather, perhaps, if you have no father?" and Seth Marshall waited anxiously for the answer which would tell him if his aged sire were yet numbered among the living.

In his ravings Walter had never spoken of him, and the heart, not less a child's because its owner was a man, grew faint with fear lest his father should be dead. Walter's reply, however, dissipated all his doubt.

"Yes, my grandfather lives there, but this is not from him," and breaking open the envelope, Walter read what Mr. Graham had written, heeding little what was said of business, scarcely knowing, indeed, that business was mentioned at all, in his great joy at finding that Charlotte and not Jessie was William's chosen bride.

"He deceived me purposely," he thought, and then, as he realized more and more that Jessie was not married, he said aloud, "I am so glad, so glad."

"You must have good news," the captain suggested, and Walter answered:

"Yes, blessed news," then as there came over him a strong desire to talk of the good news with some one, he continued:

"Tell me, Captain Murdock, have I talked of Jessie Graham?"

The captain started, for he had not thought of Jessie as the daughter of Richard Graham.

"Yes," he answered, "you said that she was married."

"But she isn't," interrupted Walter. "It was a lie imposed upon me by that false-hearted William Bel-lenger."

"You spoke of him, too," said the captain, "and I fancied he might be your cousin. You see I am tolerably well posted in your affairs," and the pleasant smile which accompanied these words, disarmed Walter at once from all fear that his secrets would be betrayed.

"What else did you learn?" he asked, and the captain replied:

"There is some trouble about your father. He robbed



a bank, didn't he?" and there was a strange look in the keen eyes which did not now rest on Walter's face, but sought the floor as if doubtful of the answer.

"Never, never!" Walter exclaimed, with an energy which brought the blood to his pale cheek, and tears to the eyes riveted upon the carpet. "He never did that."

"He has been proved innocent, then?" and in the voice which asked the question there was a trembling eagerness.

"Not proved so to the world, but I need no proof," returned Walter. "I never for a moment thought him guilty."

Then after a pause, he added: "I have, I see, unwittingly divulged much of my family history, and lest you should have received a wrong impression, I may as well confess the whole to you, but not now, I am too much excited, too tired to talk longer."

He was indeed exhausted, and for several hours he lay quite still, saying but little and thinking happy thoughts of home and *Jessie*, who Mr. Graham wrote, "mourned sadly over his absence."

Suddenly remembering the message he had left, and which would seem to say he loved Charlotte Reeves he bade the captain bring to him pen and paper and with a shaking hand he wrote to Mr. Graham:

"I am getting better fast, thanks to Captain Murdock, who, though a stranger, has been the best of friends, and kindest nurse. Forgive me Mr. Graham. I thought the bride was *Jessie*. Don't hate me, I could not help it, and I had learned to love her before I heard from Mrs. Bar-



tow that you would be displeased. I will overcome it if I can, for I promised the grandmother I would not talk of love to Jessie, until my father was proved innocent."

This was all he had strength to write, and when the letter was finished, he relapsed into a thoughtful, half dreamy state, from which he did not rouse for a day or two. Then, with strength renewed, he called the captain to him, and bidding him sit down beside him, told him the whole story of his life, even to his love for Jessie Graham,—which he must not tell until his father were proved innocent.

There was a smothered groan in the direction where Mr. Marshall sat, and inwardly the unfortunate man prayed :

"How long, dear Lord, oh, how long must thy servant wait?"

"Mr. Graham may release you from that promise," he said, "and then you surely would not hesitate."

"Perhaps not," Walter answered, for in spite of what Mrs. Bartow had said, he, too, entertained a secret hope that Mr. Graham would in some way interfere for him.

"What would be the result if your father should return to Deerwood?" Captain Murdock asked. "Would they proceed against him?"

"Oh, no! oh, no!" said Walter. "It was so long ago, and everybody who knew him speaks well of him now. I have often wished he would come home, and when I was a little boy, I used to watch by the window till it grew dark, and then cry myself to sleep. Did I tell you his arm-chair stands in the kitchen corner now, just where

he left it that night he went away! It was a fancy of grandpa's that no one should ever sit in it again, and no one has, but Jessie. She would make a playhouse of it, in spite of all we could say. I wish you could see Jessie and grandfather and all."

The captain wished so, too, and in his dreams that night he was back again by the old hearthstone, sitting in the chair kept for him so long, and listening to his father's voice blessing his long-lost son.

All this might be again, he said, when he awoke, but his young wife, whose face he saw, just as it looked on her bridal day, would not be there to meet him, and the strong man wept again as he had not done in many years, over the blight which had fallen so heavily upon him.

Rapidly the days and weeks went by, and then there came letters both from Mr. Graham and Mrs. Bellenger, telling how the wedding song had been changed into a wail of sorrow, and that the elegant William Bellenger was branded as a villain. Mr. Graham, too, spoke of Jessie, saying toward the close:

"You told me no news, dear Walter, when you said you loved my daughter. I knew it long ago and I have watched you narrowly, to see if you were worthy of her. That I think you are, I prove to you by saying, that to no young man of my acquaintance, would I entrust her happiness so willingly as to you, and had you talked to me freely upon the subject, you would not, perhaps, have been in California now. Your remark concerning Mrs. Bartow reminded me of what she once told me, and when

I questioned her again upon the subject, demanding to know the truth, she confessed the falsehood she imposed on you, by saying I did not wish you to marry Jessie. I can find nothing to excuse her save her foolish pride, which will probably never be subdued. Still she is your staunch friend now, just as she is poor William's bitter enemy. You have said you would not talk of love to Jessie until your father was proved innocent. This, my dear Walter, may never be, even if he is living, which is very doubtful. So why should you hesitate. You have my free consent to say to her whatever you think best to say. She is in Deerwood now with poor Lottie, who is sadly mortified at what she considers her disgrace. I am doing what I can for William, so is his grandmother; but his father refuses to see him or even hear his name spoken. Unfortunate Will, he seems penitent, and has acknowledged everything to me, even the wicked part he acted toward you, by deceiving you. I thank Heaven every day that Jessie's choice fell on you, and not on him."

This letter made Walter supremely happy, and to Captain Murdock, in whom he now confided everything, he told how, immediately on his return to New York, he should ask the young lady to be his wife.

"And would you like your father to come back even though his guilt could not be disproved?" the captain asked, and Walter answered:

"Yes, oh, yes; but I'm afraid he never will. Poor father, if I could once look upon his face."

"You shall—you do!" sprang to the lips of Captain

Murdock, but he forced the wild words back, and going away alone, he prayed, as he often did, that the load he had borne so long might be lifted from his heart, and that the sun of domestic peace, which had early set in gloom, might shine upon his later life.



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## CHAPTER XV.

## GLORIOUS NEWS.

THERE was a package for Walter, who had now been some months in California,—a package of letters and papers both,—and with a beating heart he sat down to read, taking Mr. Graham's letter first, for that might have a message from Jessie.

It was glorious news which the letter contained, and it wrung a cry of delight from Walter, which was heard by the captain, who turned to see what it was that thus affected his companion.

"Listen, Captain Murdock," Walter exclaimed "listen to this. *My father is proved innocent. Heyward was the robber,—he came back and confessed it the night before he died, and——*"

He did not finish the sentence, for, like a wild beast startled from its lair by sudden fright, Captain Murdock bounded to his side, and snatching the letter from him, devoured its contents at a glance, then striking his hands together, he fairly screamed :

"Thank God ! the year of jubilee has come,—the day I've waited for so long !"

Earnestly and half fearfully Walter gazed up into the marble face, and into the eyes that burned like coals of

fire, seeing in them now, for the first time, a look like his grandfather. Then a suspicion of truth burst upon him, and springing up he caught the gray-haired captain by the arm, demanding faintly:

"Who are you? Tell me, or I shall die."

"I am your father, boy," and opening his arms, the father received to his embrace his fainting son.

The news and the surprise combined were too much for Walter, and for some little time he lay upon the bed, whither his father had borne him, unconscious of the caresses, the words of love, the whispered blessings showered on him by one who felt now that he trod a different earth and breathed a different air from what he had done for twenty-four long years.

"*Father*,"—how like music that word sounded in his ear when Walter said it at last, and how it wrung tears from eyes which until recently, were unused to weep.

"Say it again, my son. Call me father often. 'Tis the name I've thirsted for, but never expected to hear," and the strong man, weak now as a woman, kissed lovingly the face of the handsome boy.

"Read it aloud," Walter said, pointing to the crumpled letter lying on the floor.

Mr. Marshall complied, and read in tremulous tones how Ralph Heyward, after an absence of eighteen years, had again asked shelter at the farm-house, saying he was tired and sick. His request was granted, and when the morning came he was too ill to leave his bed, but lay there for many days, kindly cared for by the deacon, to whom he made a full confession of his guilt, saying that *he*, and

not Seth Marshall, robbed the Deerwood Bank ; that it was what he intended to do when he came there that night, feigning drunkenness the better to cover his design.

He knew that Seth kept the keys in his pocket, and when sure that the household were asleep, he arose, and putting on his victim's coat, cap and shoes, left the house stealthily, committed the theft, hid the money and then as cautiously returned to his room, and was settling himself a second time into an apparently drunken sleep, when he heard some one up, looking, as he supposed, for the cause of the disturbance he had made in accidentally upsetting a chair as he left Seth Marshall's room. Then he was still again until the morning came, and the arrest was made.

At the examination, when he saw the terrible anguish of the young wife, he was half tempted to confess, but dared not, for fear of what might follow ; so he kept his own counsel, and for a few years remained in the vicinity of Deerwood, hoping to hear something of the man he had so wronged, and then he went away to the West, wandering up and down with that burden of guilt upon his soul, until at last, knowing that he must die, he returned to Deerwood, and seeking out the farm-house asked permission to lay his head again beneath its hospitable roof. This done, he acknowledged to the father how he had sinned against the son, and after making an affidavit of his guilt, died a penitent and, it was to be hoped, a better man.

"And now," wrote Mr. Graham in conclusion, "I wish I could convey to you some little idea of the present ex-



citement in Deerwood. Everybody is talking of the disclosure, and of your father, who, were he here, would be a greater lion even than Lafayette in his day. And I wish that he were here. Poor Seth! God forgive me that I testified against him. I verily believed him guilty up to the hour when Heyward proved him innocent. Oh, if he only could come back to me again, and to the home where your aged grandfather prays continually that his sun may not go down until he has seen once more the face of his boy. Poor old man, it is a touching sight to see his lips move continually, and hear the words he whispers: 'God send him back, God send him back.' You know Aunt Debby always said, 'Seth allus was a good boy;' she repeats it now with ten-fold earnestness, as if it were a fact in which everybody concurred. It may be that your father is dead, and if so he cannot return; but if still living, I am sure we shall see him again, for I shall take means to have the story inserted in the papers far and near, so that it will be sure to meet his eye.

"Meanwhile, Walter, come home as soon as you are able to bear the journey. We want you here to share in our great joy. Leave the business, if it is not arranged, and come. We are waiting anxiously for you, and none more anxiously than Jessie. She has been wild with delight ever since I told her your father was innocent. Mrs. Bellenger, too, shares the general joy and were yourself and your father here our happiness would be complete."

"We will go, too," cried Walter, "you as Captain Murdock at first, to see if they will know you. Oh, I wish it

were now that we were there," and Walter's dark eyes danced as he anticipated the meeting between the deacon and his son.

"Yes, we will go," Mr. Marshall answered, and then, after looking over the papers which Mr. Graham had sent, and which contained Heyward's confession, he sat down by Walter and told of his wanderings since that dreadful night when he left home, branded as a thief and robber. "But first," said he, "let me tell you how I chanced to run away. I should never have done it but for Mr. Graham, who begged and entreated me to go."

"Mr. Graham!" exclaimed Walter. "Why, he, I thought, was your bail."

"So he was," returned the father, "but he wished me to come away for all that. He would rather lose all his fortune, he said, than know I was in prison, and sent there on his testimony. So he urged me to leave, contriving a way for me to do so, and even carrying me himself, that stormy night, many miles from Deerwood. I dreaded the State prison. I believe I would rather have been hung, and I yielded to his importunities on one condition only. I know his father would be very indignant, and that people would censure him severely, too, if it were known that he was, in my secret; and, as I would not have him blamed, I made him promise to me solemnly that he would never tell that he first suggested my going and then helped me away. He has kept his promise, and it is well. I have ample means, now, for paying him all I owe, and many a time I have thought to send it to him, but I have been dead to all my friends

so long that I decided to remain so. I wrote to him from Texas, asking for you all, and learning from him of Ellen's death, and of your birth. You were a feeble child, he said, and probably would not live. I had never seen you, my son, and when I heard that my darling was gone,—my mother, too,—and that my father and best friend still believed me guilty, I felt a growing coldness towards you all. I would never write home again, I said. I would forget that I ever had a home, and for a time I kept this resolution, plunging into vices of every kind,—swearing, gambling, drinking”——

“Oh father,—father!” said Walter, with a shudder. “You do not tell me true.”

“It's all true, my boy, and more,” returned the father, “but I was overtaken at last, by a terrible sickness, the result of dissipation in New Orleans. A sister of charity saved my life, and opened my heart to better things. Her face was like Ellen's and it carried me back to other days, until I wept like a little child over my past folly. From that sick bed, I arose a different man, and then for years I watched the Northern papers to see if they contained anything like we have just read. But they did not, and I said I cannot go home yet. I sometimes saw Mr. Graham's name, and knew that he was living, but whether you were dead or alive I could not even guess. Here, in California, where I have been for the last ten years, I have never met a single person from the vicinity of Deerwood. At first I worked among the mines, amassing money so fast as even to astonish myself. At length, weary of the labor, I left the mines and came to the city,

where I am known as Captain Murdock, the title having been first given to me in sport by some of my mining friends. Latterly I have thought of going home, for it is so long since the robbery that I had no fears of being arrested, and I was about making up my mind to do so, when chance threw you in my way, and it now remains for you to say when we both shall start."

"At once,—at once," said Walter, who had listened intently to the story, giving vent to an occasional exclamation of surprise. "We will go in the very next steamer. I shall not have a chance to write, but it will be just as well. I wish to see if grandpa or Mr. Graham will recognize you."

Mr. Marshall had no objections to testing the recollections of his father, and he readily consented to go, saying to his friends that as New England was his birthplace he intended accompanying his young friend home.

"I can write the truth back to them," he thought, "and save myself much annoyance."

Thus it was arranged, and the next steamer for New York which left the harbor of San Francisco, bore on its deck the father and his son, both eager and expectant and anxious to be at the end of the voyage.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## THANKSGIVING DAY AT DEERWOOD.

THE dinner table was nicely arranged in the "best room" of the farm-house, and Jessie Graham, with a happy look on her bright face, flitted in and out, arranging the dishes a little more to her taste, smoothing the snowy cloth, pausing a moment before the fire blazing so cheerfully upon the hearth, and then glancing from the window, across the frozen fields to the hillside where a new grave had been made since the last Thanksgiving Day.

"Dear Ellen!" she sighed, "there is no plate for her now,—no chair." Then, as she remembered an absent one, dearer far than Ellen, she thought, "I'll make believe *he's* here," and seeking Mrs. Howland, who was busy with her turkey, she said: "May I put a plate for Walter? It will please him when he hears of it."

"Yes, child," was the ready answer, and Jessie was hastening off, when a feeble voice from the kitchen corner where the deacon sat, called her back:

"Jessie," the old man said. "Put Seth's arm-chair next to mine. It is the last Thanksgiving I shall ever see, and I would fancy him with me once more," and as Jessie turned toward the place where the leathern chair stood, she heard the words:

"God send him back,—God send him back."

"It is the deacon's wish," she whispered to her father, who, with Mrs. Bellenger, was also spending Thanksgiving at the farm-house, and who looked up surprised, as Jessie dragged from its accustomed post, the ponderous arm-chair, and wheeling it into the other room, placed it to the deacon's right.

The dinner was ready at last, and Mrs. Howland was only waiting for the oysters to boil, before she served them up, when Jessie gave a scream of joy, and dropping the dish of cranberries she held, ran off into the pantry, where, as Aunt Debby affirmed, she hid herself in the closet, though from what she was hiding it were difficult to tell. There was surely nothing appalling in the sight of *Walter*, who, alighting from the village omnibus, now stood upon the threshold, with Captain Murdock.

They had stayed all night in the city, where Walter had learned that Mr. Graham, Jessie and his grandmother, had gone to Deerwood to spend Thanksgiving Day.

"We shall be there just in time," he said to his father, when at an early hour they took their seat in the cars; but his father paid little heed, so intent was he upon noting the changes which more than twenty years had wrought in the localities with which he was once familiar.

As the day wore on, and he drew near to Deerwood, he leaned back in his seat, faint and sick with the crowd of memories which came rushing over him.

"Deerwood!" shouted the conductor, and looking from the window, he could scarcely believe it possible that



this flourishing village was the same he had known among the hills. When he went away *one* spire alone pointed heavenward, now he counted *four*, while in the faces of some who greeted Walter again he saw the looks of those who had been boys with him, but who were fathers now to these grown-up young men.

"I am old," he sighed, and mechanically entering the omnibus, he folded his arms in moody silence, as they rattled down the street. But when the brow of the hill was reached, and Walter said: "See, father, there's our orchard," he started, and looked, not at the orchard, nor at the gable roof now fully in view, nor at the maple tree, but down the lane, along the beaten path, to where a tall monument gleamed white and cold in the gray November light.

"That's her's,—that's mother's," Walter said, following the direction of his father's eyes; then fearing that his father, by his emotions, should betray himself too soon, he arose and sat by him, taking his hand, and saying tenderly:

"Don't give way. You have me left, and grandpa, and Aunt Mary, and Jessie,—won't you try to be calm?"

"Yes, yes," whispered the agitated man, and with a tremendous effort he was calm, as, standing in the well-remembered kitchen, he waited till the noisy outburst had somewhat subsided, and Walter been welcomed home.

But not a single thing escaped the notice of his keen eyes, which wandered round the room taking in each familiar object, and noticing where there had been a change.



There was none in Aunt Debby, he said,—wrinkled, gray, slight and straight as her high-backed chair,—just as he remembered her years ago,—just so she was now—her kerchief crossed as she wore it then,—her spectacles on her forehead,—her apron long, and meeting almost behind, and on the chair-post her satin bag with the knitting visible therefrom. She was the same, but the comely matron Walter called Aunt Mary, was she the blooming maiden he had left so long ago, and the elegant-looking stranger, with the unmistakeable city polish, was that his early friend? It took him but an instant to think all this, and then his eyes fell upon the old man by the fire,—the man with the furrowed cheek, the bowed form, the silvery hair and shaking limbs,—who, like some giant oak which has yielded to the storms of many a winter, sat there the battered wreck of a once noble man. That was his father, but he would not call him so just then, and when Walter, turning at last, said: "This is Captain Murdock, the kind friend who took care of me," he went forward, taking first Aunt Debby's hand, then his sister Mary's, then Mr. Graham's, and now there was a slight faltering of manner, while his eyes sought the floor, for they could not meet the gaze fixed so curiously upon him.

"Grandpa, this is Captain Murdock," said Walter, while Captain Murdock advanced a step or so and took the shriveled hand, which had so often rested fondly on his head.

Oh, how Seth longed to kiss that feeble hand; but he dared not, and he was glad that Walter, by his loud,

rapid talking, attracted the entire attention, leaving him to sit down unobserved, when the meeting between himself and Mrs. Bellenger was over. At her he had looked rather inquisitively, for she was his Ellen's mother, and his heart yearned toward her for the sake of his gentle wife.

Meanwhile Walter, without seeming to do so, had been watching for somebody, who, behind the pantry door, was trying to gain courage to come out.

"I'll look at him, anyway," she said, and Walter glanced that way just in time to see a profusion of raven curls and a shining, round black eye.

"Jessie," called Mr. Graham, who saw them too, "Jessie, hadn't you better come out and gather up the cranberries you dropped so suddenly when the omnibus drove up?"

"Father, how can you?" and the young lady immediately appeared, and greeted Walter quite naturally.

He evidently was embarrassed, for he hastened to present her to Captain Murdock, who, feeling, intuitively, that he beheld his future daughter-in-law, took both her soft chubby hands in his and held them there, while he said, a little mischievously:

"I have heard much of you, Miss Jessie, from my so—, my friend, I mean," he added, quickly, correcting himself, but not so quickly that Jessie did not detect what he meant to say.

One by one she scanned his features, then the deacon's, then Walter's, and then, with a flash of intelligence in her bright eyes, turned to the latter for a confirmation of her suspicions. Walter understood her meaning, and with an answering nod, said softly:

"By and by."

"The dinner will be cold," suggested Mrs. Howland, and then the deacon rose, and leaning on his cane, walked into the adjoining room, when he took his seat at the head of the table.

"There's a chair for you," Jessie said to Walter, who, following the natural laws of attraction, kept close to her side. "There's one for *you* and him, too, my old playhouse," and she pointed to the leathern chair.

"Sit here, Captain Murdock,—here," said Walter, hurrying on as he saw Mrs. Howland giving the stranger another seat than that.

"Walter," and there was reproach in the deacon's voice, "not in your father's chair."

"Yes, grandpa," said Walter, "Captain Murdock has been a father to me,—let him sit there for once."

So Captain Murdock sat there, his heart throbbing so loudly that Jessie, who was next to him, could hear it beat, and see his chin quiver, when the voice nearly eighty year's old, was asking God's blessing on their Thanksgiving Dinner; thanking God for returning their boy to them, and finishing the prayer with the touching petition: "Send the other back! oh, send the other back!"

Owing to the presence of the captain, who was considered a stranger, not a word was spoken of Seth, until they arose from the table, when Walter, unable longer to keep still, said:

"And so my father is free from all blame?"

Involuntarily Jessie went up to him and put her arm in his, waiting breathlessly for what would follow next.

"Yes, Walter," returned the deacon, "my Seth is innocent. Heaven bless him wherever he may be, and send him to me before I die, so I can hear him say he didn't lay it up against me,—my hardening my heart and thinking he was guilty. Poor Seth, poor Seth! I'd give my life to blot out all the past and have him with me just as he was before he went away."

Captain Murdock was standing with his face to the window, but, as the deacon ceased speaking, he turned, and going up to him, placed his hand on either shoulder and looked into his eyes.

The movement was a most singular one, and to Mr. Graham, who knew that there must be a powerful motive for the action, there came a suspicion of the truth; but none to the old man, whose eyes fell beneath the burning gaze riveted upon him.

"Who are you?" he asked in a bewildered tone, "why do you look at me so hard? He scares me; Walter, take him away."

"Grandpa, don't you know him?" and Walter drew near to them, but not until the old man's ear had caught the whispered name of "*Father*."

Then, with a scream of joy, he wound his feeble arms around the stranger's neck.

"Seth, boy, darling, Walter, am I going mad, or is it true? *Is it Seth?* Is it my boy? Tell me, Walter," and releasing their grasp, the shaking hands were stretched supplicatingly toward Walter, who answered:

"Yes, grandpa. *It's Seth*. I found him, and I have brought him home."

"Oh Seth, Seth," and the hoary head bowed itself upon the neck of the stranger, while the poor old man sobbed like a little child. "I didn't expect it, Seth, though I've prayed for it so hard. Bless you, bless you, boy, I didn't mean to go against you. I would have died at any time to know that you were innocent. Forgive me, Seth, because I am so old and weak."

"I do forgive you," answered Seth. "It's all forgotten now, and I've come home to stay with you always till you die."

There was a hand laid lightly on Seth's shoulder, and turning, he looked into the face of Mr. Graham, which quivered with emotion, as he said:

"I, too, have need of your forgiveness."

"None, Richard, none," and locked in each other's arms, the friends long parted cancelled the old debt, and in the heart of neither was there a feeling save that of perfect love.

Long and passionately Mrs. Howard wept over her brother, for his return brought back the past, and all that she had suffered since the night he went away.

Aunt Debby, too, was much affected, but did not omit her accustomed "He allus was a good boy."

Then Mrs. Bellenger approached, and offering her hand, said to him very kindly:

"You are dear to me for Ellen's sake, and though I never saw you until to-day, my heart claims you for a child. Shall I be your mother, Mr. Marshall?"

He could only reply by pressing the hand she extended, for his heart was all too full for utterance.

"Let me go away alone," he said at last, "to weep out my great joy," and opening the door of what was once his room, he passed for a time from their midst.

The surprise had apparently disturbed the deacon's reason, for even after his son had left him he continued talking just the same: "Poor Seth,—poor child, to think your hair should be so gray, and you but a little boy."

Then, when Seth returned to them he made him sit down beside him, and holding both his hands, smiled up into his face a smile far more painful than tears would have been.

"Seth's come home. Did you know it?" he would say to those around him, as if it were to them a piece of news, and often as he said it, he would smooth the gray hair which seemed to trouble him so much.

Gradually, however, his mind became clearer, and he was able to understand all that Seth was telling them of his experience since the night he went away.

At last, just as the sun was setting, Mr. Marshall arose, and without a word, passed into the open air. No one watched him to see whither he went, for all knew that before he returned to them he would go down the lane, along the beaten path, to where the moonlight fell upon a little grave.

It was long before he came back, and when he did, and entered the large kitchen, two figures stood by the western window, and he thought the arm of the taller was thrown about the waist of the shorter, while the face of the shorter was very near to that of the taller. Ad-

vancing toward them and stroking the dark curls, he said, half playfully, half earnestly:

"I believe that as Mr Marshall I have not greeted Jessie yet, so I will do it now. Are you to be my daughter, little girl?"

"Yes, she is," answered Walter, while Jessie broke away from them, and was not visible again that night.

But when, at a late hour, Mrs. Bellenger left the happy group still assembled around the cheerful fire, and sought her room, from the depths of the snowy pillows, where Jessie lay nestled, there came a smothered voice, saying, half timidly:

"This is the nicest Thanksgiving I ever had, and I shall remember it forever."





## CHAPTER XVII.

## CONCLUSION.

FOUR years have passed away since that Thanksgiving dinner, and for the deacon, who, then, did not expect to see another, there seem to be many yet in store. Hale, hearty and happy, he sits in his arm-chair, smoking his accustomed pipe; and when the villagers, who come often to see him, tell him how the old farm-house is improved, and how they should scarcely know it, he always answers:

"Yes, Seth has good taste, and Seth is rich. He could buy Deerwood, if he tried. He built those new houses for the poor down there by the river; he built the factory, too, and gives them all employment. Seth is a blessed boy."

Others, too, there were, besides the deacon, who called Seth Marshall blessed, and never since his return has a voice been raised against him.

After becoming somewhat accustomed to his new position as a free and respected man, his first wish was to modernize the farm-house a little more according to his ideas of taste and comfort. Once he thought to build a splendid mansion near by, but to this suggestion the father said:

"No ; I like the old place best. The new house might be handsomer, but it would not be the one where you and I, and all of us were born, and your mother died. Wait till I'm dead, and then do as you please."

And so Seth is waiting, and as he waits he sets out trees and shrubbery, and beautifies a plot of ground, on which he will sometime erect a dwelling as a summer residence for his son, who lives in the city, and calls Mrs. Bartow grandma.

When the first Christmas snows were falling after his father's return, Walter made Jessie his bride, and there now plays at his fireside a chubby, black-eyed boy, whom they call Graham Marshall, and who spends more time in Deerwood than he does in New York. Quite as old as the hoary man in the corner, who sometimes calls him Walter, but oftener Seth, he "rides to Boston" on the deacon's knee, pulls the deacon's beard, wears the deacon's glasses, smokes a stick of candy, and spits in imitation of the deacon, and then falls away to sleep in the deacon's lap,—the two forming a most beautiful picture of old age and infancy together.

At Mr. Graham's house, there is a beautiful six-months' baby, whose hair looks golden in the sunlight, and whose eyes of blue are much like those of Ellen Howland. They call her Nellie, and in all the world there is nothing one-half so precious as this child to the broken, melancholy man, who often comes to see her, and when no one can hear him, whispers sadly :

"Sweet Nellie,—darling Nellie,—little snowdrop !" But

whether he means the infant in the crib, or the Nellie dead long ago, is difficult to tell.

For eighteen months he toiled inside the prison walls, and then the powerful influence of Mr. Graham, Seth Marshall and Walter combined, procured him a pardon. An humbled and a better man, he would not leave the city. He would rather remain, he said, and live down his disgrace, than have it follow him as it was sure to do. So he stayed, accepting thankfully a situation which Walter procured for him, and Mrs. Bellenger, when she saw that he was really changed, gladly gave him a home with herself, for she was lonely now that Walter was gone.

Old Mrs. Reeves was very much astonished that the Grahams and Marshalls should make so much of one who had been in State prison, and said :

"She was glad that Charlotte had married a Southern planter and gone to Mississippi, as there was no knowing what notions might have entered her brain."

Every summer there is a family gathering of the Grahams and Marshalls with Mrs. Bellenger and Mrs. Bartow at Deerwood, where the deacon seems as young and happy as any of them. And now, where our story opened we will bring it to a close, at the farm-house where the old man sits smoking in the twilight with his son and grandson, and great-grandson around him,—representatives of four generations, with a difference of nearly eighty years between the first and fourth.

THE END.

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